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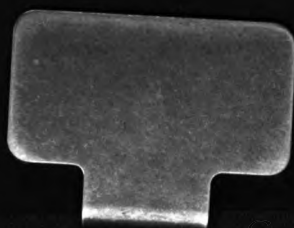
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THE
INTERCESSORY PRAYER
OF
OUR LORD,

*AN EXPOSITION OF THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER
OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.*

BY
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The preparation of the following pages for the press occupied the last few months of the Author's life, and was barely completed when he was removed by death ; it thus devolves upon his widow to fulfil his wishes by their publication.

The work is printed exactly as it left the Author's pen, and his widow hopes that it may prove of value not only to those who knew and esteemed him, but also to those who are interested in the life and teachings of our Lord.

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I.

THE DIVINE GLORIFICATION.

I.

THE DIVINE GLORIFICATION.

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.”—JOHN xvii. 1.

OUR Lord had finished His farewell or closing discourse to His disciples. In it He had expressed His tender love for them, had announced to them His last wishes, had in various forms promised them the influence and presence of the Comforter after His own departure, and made known to them what treatment they were to expect in the sinful world which had rejected Him. And now, most probably ere He left that upper room where they were assembled, He lifted His voice in prayer, first for Himself, and then for them, commending them to the grace and protection of God, to whose service they were specially called.

4 *The Intercessory Prayer of our Lord.*

This prayer presented by Christ Jesus is one of the most precious and sublime portions of Scripture. So far as the mere words are concerned, they may be said to be simple ; but the thoughts and ideas which they express are amongst the most profound which can engage the minds of men. We cannot with sufficient thankfulness magnify the goodness and the grace which have secured that one of the prayers in which the Son of God poured out His heart to the Father has been so fully and carefully preserved to us. Its exposition should be approached with devout fear and holy trembling, for it is most holy ground ; and a high spirituality of mind is the best qualification for understanding it.

It may be divided into three principal parts. In the first part, extending from the first to the fifth verse, He offers prayer for Himself ; in the second, which extends from the sixth to the nineteenth verse, He prays for His immediate disciples ; and in the third part, from the twentieth verse to the end of the chapter, He prays specially for believers in all time. Some commentators

and critics give a different division of this prayer, but the one now given seems not only the simplest, but the most accurate.* It has commonly been called the intercessory and priestly prayer of our Lord. The very fact that it was uttered aloud shows His tender thoughtfulness, as the hearing of it was evidently intended for the edification and comfort of His disciples. Cold is the heart that can read it without emotion. It throws a halo of glory around the throne of grace, and hallows all prayer from human lips under all circumstances and through all time.

In this first verse three points are suggested for consideration: the fact announced—"the hour is come;" the petition presented—"Father, glorify Thy Son;" and the end or object contemplated—"that Thy Son may also glorify Thee."

I. The fact: **Father, the hour is come.*" In the attitude and exercise of prayer, Jesus "lifted up His eyes to heaven," thus showing Himself in all human things most truly a man, but without

* "The three main divisions are so simple and so plain, that this trichotomy has been generally acknowledged from the earliest time."—*Stier, on the Words of the Lord Jesus.* (Clark's For. Theol. Lib., vol. vi., p. 427.)

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imperfection or sin. He raised His eyes upward, as it is our instinct to do, and addressed the Father. He does not say "Our Father," as He had taught His disciples to say, for this form of expression would have seemed to place Him on the same level with them; nor does He say "My Father," as this might seem, on the other hand, to convey the sense of too great a separation between Himself and His disciples in connexion with such a prayer; but He says simply "Father!" that great name which He alone had fully unfolded as summing up in itself all the grace of His nature and all the mystery of redemption. In this prayer our Lord addresses God four times by the appellation "Father" by itself, and twice accompanied with an epithet, "Holy Father," "Righteous Father;" in all six times, and the word is generally used when a new portion or division of the prayer begins.

"Father," said Jesus on this occasion, "the hour is come." To what hour does He refer? His own words help us to determine this without any difficulty. In the prospect of His agony and

death He had previously said, also in the hearing of His disciples, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John xii. 27). The very silence in this case, or the absence of definiteness, seems to speak unmistakably. The day of judgment is repeatedly referred to in Scripture as "that day," a day distinguished from all others by its momentous solemnities and its sublime disclosures. So Christ here speaks of "the hour"—the most momentous hour of the world's history—the hour to which all the past had looked forward, and on which all the future hung. It was the hour of the Saviour's suffering and sacrifice as an atonement for human sin—the hour of the world's moral "crisis." That hour was now at hand, and it may be viewed in its relation to the Messiah, to the Father, and to the world. Here it is in its relation to the Saviour with which we are chiefly concerned.

It was the hour of *mysterious suffering*. During His whole earthly life, Christ Jesus had been a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

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Poverty, suffering, and ill-treatment had been His lot in this world. He was despised and rejected of men, homeless and almost friendless in the world which He had made. "He had come unto His own, and His own received Him not." Marvellous condescension on His part! In contact with men—

"Grief was His close companion still
Through all His life below."

Tears often flowed down His cheeks in sympathy with human woe, and anguish often oppressed His pure and spotless soul. In all this experience there was much mystery, but the greatest mystery now approached. The darkness of His condition thickened on His soul; the clouds gathered over Him; the storm of evil lowered, and threatened to break upon His devoted head; yet He could calmly say, as He saw it all before Him, "Father the hour is come." Human sin and guilt pressed upon His spirit, and the holy consciousness of such environment filled His soul with agony. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and the burden brought to Him a suffering which we cannot fathom: the sword of Jehovah was

drawn, and about to descend and smite Him as our surety. The garden, the judgment-hall, and the cross were before Him in all their pain and shame ; a mysterious horror began to encompass and oppress His spotless soul, and He felt that the hour was come.

It was the hour of *mortal conflict*. "The prince of this world cometh," said Jesus, "and hath nothing in me."* The final struggle was at hand. The Saviour knew that Satan would be cast out and overthrown, but the last trial was yet to come. There had been great and keen moral conflict, if we may call it so, previously, in which the great adversary had always been defeated : now he was gathering up his strength and mustering his forces for a final effort in which to strike the last great blow. Our Lord saw and felt the coming conflict. He heard the muttered rage of hell ; He perceived the increasing recklessness and cruelty of man. Mighty legions of evil powers were against the Holy One of God, and the field was prepared for the decisive battle. Christ Jesus was to enter that field alone

* John xiv. 30.

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against the hellish foes of God and man. The crisis was thus at hand. Now the character and honour of the everlasting God were to be vindicated. Satan's hosts were to be overthrown, and the world emancipated from their grasp; and in the prospect of this awful conflict the Saviour said, "Father, the hour is come."

It was the hour of *glorious exploit*. Our Lord was engaged in a momentous enterprise in which the honour of His Father and the redemption of man were involved. He had come to do a work which no mere created being could accomplish, in working out the deliverance and restoration of our fallen race, and providing for our eternal welfare. Many considerations and interests were connected with this godlike enterprise. For this the Son of God had become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. From the hour of His advent, every part of His life amongst men had contributed to the progress of this great work. But all that had gone on up till now had in a sense been preparatory, and would be of no avail without that which was still to come. Just as an arch is nothing but weakness, imperfection, and incoherence, without the keystone, so

the death and sacrifice and resurrection of Christ Jesus are necessary to seal His ministry and perfect the work which was given Him to do, and which His life began. His suffering was as the travail of His soul. And now the last hour of trial was approaching, and He had to gird Himself for the final effort. How much this involved may be gathered from His own words of anguish: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was not possible, if the Divine work was to be accomplished. It was the crisis of the world's history and hope. Failure now would invalidate the whole: the hour was come. But though we may use human words concerning it, we cannot comprehend all that hour contained for Christ, and all that it brought to Him. What did the Saviour need? What did He ask for Himself in that hour?

II. The petition which He presented. A special personal request is made by our Lord: "*Glorify Thy Son.*" It is somewhat remarkable that Jesus here speaks in the third person—"Thy Son," not "glorify me;" as if to indicate still more impressively to the disciples the relationship between Him and the Father. But this was by no means

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all that was meant. How tender and how touching is the plea—"Glorify Thy Son," the Son of Thy love. The voice from the celestial presence had again and again declared of Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Saviour here, as it were, reminds the Father of this fact and relationship. He had left the Father's bosom to do His will and accomplish the purposes of His grace in the salvation of man; and now, in the prospect of the awful agony and conflict which this grand enterprise involved, He prays, "Father, glorify Thy Son." There is no confession in these words, not a syllable implying any imperfection or shortcoming, as there must have been had Jesus been merely a good man; there is not a word expressive of infirmity—only a petition for glorification: "Glorify Thy Son." What does this mean? The words *glory* and *glorify* may vary in signification according to circumstances. Glory to a man engaged in earnest conflict would be victory; glory to a man struggling with poverty and suffering from want would be affluence; glory to a man in sickness would most fitly be health. Each blessing respectively would be glorious. So

when Christ Jesus presents this petition, He unquestionably has in view the hour that was coming on Him, His time of agony and suffering, and the completion of the work which He had come to do, so that the glorification for which He prays would have a special relation to that. It would necessarily involve all the Divine acknowledgment and support needful for His triumph in the crisis immediately before Him. The petition comprehended *Divine recognition* : "Glorify Thy Son ;" as if the Saviour had prayed, "Own me as Thy Son ; show to men, even in the hour of my greatest suffering and deepest degradation, that I am Thy Son ; let it be known, even while wicked men cast me out, and devils seem to prevail against me, that I am doing Thy will, accomplishing Thy work, and that Thou dost acknowledge me as Thine only begotten Son." And in the hour when all would be as darkness and desolation to Him, when earth and hell would appear for the moment to be getting the victory over Him, how important that the suffering Saviour should be thus glorified ! And this glorification was given Him. Nature sympathised with the mysterious sufferer : the sun refused to shine,

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the earth quaked, the rocks rent; and men, like the Roman centurion, when they saw the spirit and conduct of Jesus on the cross, were constrained to say, "Truly this was the Son of God." The evidences were abundant and convincing that He whom the multitude, armed with swords and staves, had gone to the garden to apprehend was no ordinary prisoner, and that on the cross was there suspended no ordinary sufferer. But death had no dominion over Him. He was the Victor as well as the Victim. Especially by the resurrection from the dead was He "declared to be the Son of God with power." By the unsealing of the tomb in which His body was laid, and His conquest of death, His triumph was declared and certified before the universe, and so was He glorified.

This glorification, moreover, involved *all-sufficient support*. In the trial through which Jesus was about to pass, in the work which He had to finish, and in the baptism of suffering which He had to experience, to be supported and borne successfully through it would be to be glorified. It is as if He had prayed, "Let me not sink in the deep

waters through which I am about to pass ; let me not quail in the presence of the opposition arrayed against me ; let me not fail in the darkness which is gathering around me ; hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." Would not such support as this be true glorification ? He prays as the man Christ Jesus, the Son of the Highest, as one tempted and tried like ourselves, that He might not shrink from necessary suffering, nor sink under the heaviest trial. Hence we read that "in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, He was heard in that He feared."* He prayed for Divine support, that He might bear up under all, and go through all, as became Him who had undertaken the work of human salvation, and who knew that in the accomplishment of this mighty enterprise He had to endure the agony and shame of the cross. Such support would assuredly be glorification.

Further, His petition to be glorified comprehended the idea of *perfect success*. He had come

* Heb. v. 7.

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to do a glorious and godlike work, and its triumphant accomplishment was essential to His glory. He had come to do battle with Satan, to destroy the works of the devil: the final struggle for mastery was now at hand, and success, would be honour. Victory would be glory. As if the Lord had prayed, "I am come, O Father, to do Thy will; may the undertaking issue in glorious achievement. I am come to die for the salvation of men; let me not fail in the Divine enterprise. I am come to earth to destroy the works of the devil; the legions of hell are now arrayed against me; stand Thou by me in the conflict, and give me utterly to spoil the principalities and powers of darkness." This was the glorification which the Saviour sought: pardon procured for rebels, the overthrow of hell's purposes and power, the vindication of the name and character of God, were all involved in it, and doubtless much more than this, too deep for us to fathom. "He was heard in that He feared," and came forth the conqueror of death and hell and the glorious Redeemer of men. As the Prince and Lord of life, He reached a fulness of satisfaction and

renown which has ever since been growing in the extension of His kingdom among the sons of men—a kingdom of righteousness and glory which is to know no end. But why was Jesus desirous of being thus glorified? He clearly indicates the object which He contemplated.

III. The object. "*That Thy Son also may glorify Thee.*" Do not these words by plain inference bear decisive testimony to the Godhead of the Son, our Saviour? What mere creature could presume to say before the throne of the Eternal, "Glorify Thou me, that I may glorify Thee"? The bare idea is blasphemous—impossible. Christ Jesus, then, desires His own glorification to the end that He may glorify the Father. This is the high aim and object of all, that God may be glorified, and His only begotten Son glorified in suffering would secure this end. How much does this include? In what way would the Father's glory be promoted by the glorification of the Son? Think what Jesus had to do, what His suffering was intended to accomplish in relation to the Father, and we cannot fail to see how the Divine glory would be secured thereby. It

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would secure the *vindication of the Divine authority*. In a world of moral beings, amongst whom sin had entered, and over whom it had prevailed, such a vindication was of vast importance. Jehovah's authority had been defied, His will spurned, and His law recklessly violated by man's iniquity. The presence of evil was utterly antagonistic to the will of Him who had created man in His own likeness, and pronounced all things good. Sin was the breath of hell to defeat the Divine purpose, and blight the fair creation of God. Could it pass unrebuked, unchecked, unpunished, in the universe of a holy God? Could the Divine authority and law be resisted with impunity, or trifled with? Impossible. Therefore the Son of God became incarnate, and gave Himself to the cross, as Heaven's protest against hellish falsehood and man's iniquity. He came to make an end of sin, to show in His person and history on earth that wickedness must be condemned, and that God's authority could not be successfully with impunity defied. The Saviour's life of sorrow was connected with the sin of men, for He Himself knew no sin; and now the hour approached when, by

“the offering of His soul for sin,” the intelligent universe would have the grandest vindication of the authority and governance of the Most High, and the most impressive display of the Divine hatred of evil. Hence, for Jesus to be supported in His final trial, to be successful in this last conflict, to be borne through death, and raised again from the dead, and to be triumphant in this last step of His mighty enterprise would place God’s supreme authority on a new foundation, and show that holiness was stronger than sin, and that law was more powerful than anarchy and rebellion. Truly this would be for the glory of God.

Further, it would be a new *revelation of the Divine character*. For sinful and fallen men this was just as necessary as the establishment of the Divine authority. Evil had darkened the human mind, so that the knowledge of God among men became obscure and lost. The Creator was looked upon with dislike and distrust. How could men love a Being enveloped in darkness and regarded with dread? Jesus came to reveal the Father. His whole life and ministry had been a revelation

of the infinite God. Ever had He connected the tenderness, mercy, and love of the Father with His own mission and message to men. Often had He said in His words, and shown by His works, that He had come to do the will of God. The final evidence and full display of this truth was now about to be given in His suffering and sacrifice on the cross. Then would it be proved that "God is love;" for "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* To glorify Christ in His sufferings, so that the manifestation of the Divine character might be complete, would necessarily be for the glory of the Father. Men would see in the cross, more gloriously than anywhere besides, the perfections of the loving, righteous, and merciful God.

Finally, the glorification for which the Saviour prayed would seem the *triumph of the Divine grace*. All things were ready in the economy of God, but the sacrifice was not yet offered. Jesus had to suffer—to die, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Hence to be glorified

* 1 John iv. 10.

in His suffering, and to drink to its dregs the cup which the Father had given Him, would be the opening of the way for the free exercise of grace in harmony with righteousness. Then "mercy and truth" would meet together, then the love of God would shine through the sorrow and agony of His only begotten Son, and the issue would be the triumph of peace. Jehovah's highest honour amongst men is in the pardon of sin and the salvation of the lost, and in the bringing of many sons unto glory. We see, therefore, how truly the Divine glory is connected with the glorification of Christ. As we discern something of the grandeur of the object, we can see something of the force and importance of the Saviour's petition. Such a theme is indeed, in many respects, too high for us; but, at least, as we reflect that the glory of God was the end for which the Saviour sought His own triumph, we are very impressively taught that this ought also to be the end of all our duties and endeavours as the children of the heavenly Father.

II.

THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE.

II.

THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE.

“As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.”—JOHN xvii. 2.

THESE words must be considered as a plea for the petition which our Lord presented in the first verse—a consideration on the ground of which His prayer might be granted. It was necessary that He should be glorified on account of the position which He sustained and the office which He held. He was the one appointed Mediator between God and man, and in this capacity all power had been given Him in order to fulfil its functions. In praying that He should be glorified in His sufferings, He asked only for that which His position required, and which was needful for the full exercise of the prerogative with which He had been invested.

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I. The position assigned to Christ Jesus is described in the words, "*Thou hast given Him power over all flesh.*" It is therefore a position of mediatorial supremacy. The word rendered *power* is not mere ability or force, but *authority*—the right of dominion, as of a governor, prince, or king. He is invested with supreme authority to rule and control all. The source of this authority was God—it was given to Christ by the Father. Similar language is frequently used in respect of the Saviour, and also by Jesus regarding Himself: "The Father hath given the Son to have life in Himself." * "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." † Supreme Godhead belonged to Him from eternity. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." ‡ But the Son of God as the Eternal Word humbled Himself, took upon Him the form of a servant, connected Himself personally and permanently with our nature, for a glorious purpose. In this assumed position, power was

* John v. 26.

† *Ibid.* v. 22.

‡ *Ibid.* i. 3.

given to Him over all flesh, so that, through the participation of human nature, He has become the Lord and Head of humanity. By the will of the Father this position was assigned to Him as the Mediator and the Messiah, living in our world, identified with our race, in order to effect our safety, restoration, and glory. The nature of this authority is power to legislate, to rule, to command, to restrain. He has the right to prescribe law, to command obedience, to regulate the course, and guide the destinies of all His creatures. While He tabernacled among men, indications of His authority were manifold and constant. The winds and waves acknowledged His sway, diseases fled at His bidding, death yielded to His majesty, and even the devils obeyed Him. The "government is laid upon His shoulder," and all that governance implies in the universe devolves upon Him, for He is Lord and King. "All power," said He after His resurrection, and when taking leave of His disciples, and ascending to heaven, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." *

* Matt. xxviii. 18.

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The extent of this authority is universal—it is “power over all flesh.” This does not mean the race of mankind only, for the word flesh in Scripture very generally carries along with it the ideas of tribulation, corruption, and mortality. It is with this flesh that the Messiah, as the Redeemer, has especially to do. All that flesh is, all that it can become, is under the authority of the Son of God. His dominion as the Christ extends to all life that has been damaged by the fall and cursed by sin. The whole creation groaning and travailing in pain is His to rule and to restore. He has the keys of Hades and of death ; and the spirits of the departed leaving this earth do not pass away from His oversight or escape beyond His control. The extent of His dominion was often manifested while He abode amongst men. The material and the spiritual, the visible and the invisible, were alike subject to His rule. Human souls and human bodies felt His influence and dominion. Thus over all flesh, over all that pertained to flesh, and over all that influenced flesh for good or evil, Jesus Christ had power given to Him.

Vast and wonderful is this supremacy. Our fallen humanity, and all that pertains to it, is specially committed to the charge of the Son of God. Strong then may be our confidence and bright may be our hope. All events in man's individual and social condition, all agencies and influences which mould his character and destiny, are subject to Messiah's control. "He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."* Nor is this supremacy a matter of mere doctrinal importance; it is also a fact of momentous interest and of the highest encouragement to us. He who rules over us is one of ourselves, with human feelings and human sympathies, yet altogether free from human imperfections. The mere human nature of the Saviour was not in itself competent to exercise this "power over all flesh," any more than His Divine nature was by itself capable of suffering; but Immanuel in His complex being is King, and in His twofold nature He wields this power for our good and for the eternal glory of His Father.

* Rev. xix. 16.

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II. The prerogative which Christ Jesus is to exercise in this position assigned to Him is here declared: "That He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." This is the design of His mediatorial supremacy, and so connected with the high end and object of all—the glory of the Father. The government of the world is handed over to Christ, that He may carry out the Divine purpose, and secure the eternal salvation of the people of God. The materials of this fallen and ruined world were put, so to speak, into the hands of Christ Jesus, that He might work out the gracious designs of God, and bring forth new forms of life and moral loveliness for the honour of the God and Father of all. It is a profound and wonderful truth, that in order thus to accomplish human salvation a new arrangement of the Divine government was required. In order that the guilty and the fallen might be brought back to righteousness and life, all things connected with our being, our nature, our need and destiny, have been placed in the hands of the Lord Jesus as mediatorial King. The Father has many children to be brought into glory; it

is the only begotten Son who is to bring them by His self-sacrifice and personal triumph over sin and hell. The object of this prerogative is to give eternal life to man. It presupposes, you see, that men are doomed to die or are dead—a true and mournful supposition. Away from God, and alienated from God, souls are spiritually dead. Do you ask in what this spiritual death consists, or how it manifests itself? Its evidences are within us and everywhere around us. The dead body sees not, hears not, feels not. The most attractive sounds, the most ravishing sights, are as nothing to it, for it is insensible, inanimate. So souls spiritually dead are spiritually insensible to the greatness and importance of spiritual realities. God speaks, but they do not hear; He unveils His glory in the Gospel, but they do not see; they are insensible to His claims, His voice, His tokens; they think and act without God; are without any consciousness of happy relation to Him, and without any spontaneous spiritual movement towards Him.

But there is life, and Christ Jesus is invested with mediatorial power to give that life. How

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much is there in this one word? Who can estimate it or know it? We cannot measure all the liberty and purity, energy and joy of the true life of a human soul; it will take eternity to unfold it. We cannot tell or even conceive all the darkness and woe from which this life ensures a deliverance. The Lord Jesus is Himself our life, for "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."* Whatever there is of blessing in true life for man is entirely owing to the victory, the grace, and the gift of Christ Jesus. He provides the means of life; for His sorrow, suffering, and sacrifice were the ransom price of our redemption from death. He supplies the model of life; for in His earthly history He has left an example of what our life in Him should be, and places before us God's specimen of a man. Exalted as the Prince of Life, He has quickening powers for all who are dead in trespasses and sins. Christians know and feel that He is their life, and that their true life is hid with Him in God. He is the Vine—they are the branches; and, while without Him they

* 1 John v. 12.

"can do nothing," they are to show with growing and holy earnestness that for them to live is Christ. Surely it was needful that He who through His cross, passion, and resurrection was to be as life from the dead to our fallen race should have "power over all flesh." Unless in such a position, how could He exercise such a prerogative?

Note the extent of this prerogative—"To as many as Thou hast given Him." Is not Christ Jesus then at liberty to give life to whomsoever He will? Assuredly there is no limitation here, in the human sense of that word. In the salvation of men, the interests, purposes, and affections of the Father and the Son must be identical; still there is the truth that the Father's gift to the Son measures the Son's gift of life to men. What does this language mean, "As many as Thou hast given Him"? Not what it has too often been said or supposed to mean, that God wishes well only to a small or specified number of the human race. Oh, no! it does not mean that. God, as a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness, had a plan and purpose in the mediation of Christ; the issue of the great work of redemption was not

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left exposed to the uncertainties of earth or the oppositions of hell. Shall we ascribe to Jehovah conduct of which intelligent men would be ashamed, by supposing that He would proceed in the grand enterprise of redemption without knowing the end from the beginning, without having a design as to the majesty, magnitude, and manner of that spiritual temple which He is rearing on the foundation laid by Himself in His Son as the Rock of Ages, and which shall be radiant with His glory, and vocal with His praise for ever? God-like and glorious is this design, and vast is the gift which the Father has given to the Son—"the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession."* He has "many sons" to be brought into glory—"a multitude which no man could number," "out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation."† Man's measurement or reckoning, therefore, is not to limit the gift of God to Christ Jesus. In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Life is given by Him to all that innumerable throng given to Him by the Father. Not one shall be

* Ps. ii. 8.

† Heb. ii. 10; Rev. vii. 9.

forgotten, overlooked, or left out. Jehovah's purpose is our safety, and it will everlastingly be the theme of admiration and praise ; for all will enjoy the life which He died to procure. Because He lives, they shall live also.

Christ Jesus exercises this prerogative personally and directly. This is its preciousness and its power. Every one is brought into living spiritual contact and relationship with the Prince and Giver of life. As all are drawn to Christ, so all are inspired with love to Him, and all receive a like interest in Him and a like influence from Him. Each one of the "sacramental host" realizes for himself the gift of life, and the lot of every one individually becomes the personal care of the glorious Head and King. Human governments influence their subjects indirectly, not by immediate action on each ; but life comes direct from Christ to every one of His disciples, through the quickening grace and power of His Holy Spirit. He has entrusted to no Church, no system, no set of men, this power of quickening dead souls, of imparting and dealing with the highest life. Hence every one of His disciples

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may say as truly as St. Paul, "He loved me and gave Himself for me;" and exclaim with St. Thomas, in adoration and worship, "My Lord and my God." This personal relation to the Saviour is the safety, honour, and glory of all His followers. Every subject in His kingdom is a brother as well as a disciple. Jesus is the light of every mind, the life of every soul, the peace of every conscience, and the joy of every heart. His sheep "know His voice," and they "follow Him." The poorest and most afflicted may always realize His presence, may gladden in the consciousness of personal relationship to Him, and rejoice in the experience of personal influence from Him, who has power given Him over all flesh for salvation and glory. What gift for us is better, higher, or richer than life which cannot die?

We see then, in the position given to Christ, and in the prerogative which He exercises, unity of purpose: He that rules is He that saves; He who governs, and to whom all power belongs, is He who bestows the inestimable blessing of eternal life. The Father gives the Son, and the

Son gives back to the Father the souls whom He quickens and saves. Thus we can also see the certainty of the result. Christ Jesus is engaged in carrying out the gracious designs of the Father, and there can be no failure, no shortcoming. None can hinder the Divine purpose, none can defeat the Saviour's power. The issues of redemption are sure, and they will be amazing and glorious as they are sure. Hear the Master's words, "I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all : and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." *

* John x. 28, 29.

III.

THE EVERLASTING LIFE.

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“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”—
JOHN xvii. 3.

ONE in our nature, yet possessing the Divine nature and authority, and occupying a regal position in the universe, is now exalted to raise men from their moral degradation and spiritual death to the glories of a life that shall be everlasting. In this verse our Lord explains what this life is, and tells us in what it consists: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” It is commonly supposed that Christ adds this definition or explanation parenthetically for the sake of His disciples, that they might know in what true life consisted. There may be truth in this. But the words were part of a prayer to

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God, and not simply nor chiefly instruction to the disciples; and it is not difficult to see their connexion as an argument for His request to be glorified. The glorifying of Christ in order to give eternal life was connected with the glorification of the Father, since that eternal life consists in the knowledge of God—a knowledge which possesses and pervades the whole being of man.

This is the only occasion, so far as we read in the Gospels, on which our Lord uses in reference to Himself the compound name JESUS CHRIST. "He presents Himself, in the presence of His listening disciples before the Father, in the most sublime self-testimony, uttering that designation of Himself which was *thereby* sanctified, instituted, and ordained for all future testimony to His person."*

In endeavouring to understand these words we may consider first:—I. The inestimable blessing of which our Lord speaks, and which is to be realized by us. "Eternal life"—terms which deserve our most profound and thoughtful reflec-

* Stier, "Words of the Lord Jesus," vol. vi. p. 445. (Clark's Foreign Theological Library.)

tion. Life itself, as ordinarily enjoyed, is a great boon. For a year of life how much will men give! "My kingdom," a dying monarch is reported to have said, "for an inch of time." To live and enjoy life in their own way is the great business of most men. For imaginary good and fancied pleasure, so that life may be a delight, men will often make any sacrifice. Yet after all what is this present life in itself? "It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." * And when it is most eagerly prized and most hilariously spent, its possessor may in the saddest sense be dead, with no true life in his soul towards God, and having no spiritual perception or sensibility. Multitudes strive, and strive successfully, to make their life in this world a thing of gaiety, amusement, and pleasure, while they are spiritually dead. "To be carnally minded is death." †

Eternal life, then, is without doubt the highest possible life for man—life without end, the life which the Saviour is enthroned to bestow. Can we form any intelligent idea of its blessedness

* James iv. 14.

† Rom. viii. 6.

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and perfection and glory? Two causes or influences may end our life on earth. It may be terminated from without or from within—by external force or by inward illness or disease. Eternal life must therefore be life without any power beyond itself, and without any element in itself to bring it to an end. Thus we may get some apprehension of its felicity and preciousness. It has nothing to terminate it from without. It is life most fully in the favour of God; what then can be against it? Force from God alone sent forth either directly or indirectly can end life; and the Divine power is entirely on the side of this life. Eternal life is life against which there is no curse, no condemning vengeance, no destructive energy—a life in the favour of the Highest, cherished and fostered by His grace, to rise into glory for ever. Hence there is nothing in the universe beyond itself to bring it to a close; it is a life which will run on and on, sheltered and supplied by the inexhaustible light and love of the Almighty Father. The curse has been taken away, the condemnation has been removed, the sentence against man's life has been

cancelled through the sacrifice of the Son of God, and no power now can prevail against it for ever. God is on its side to nourish it through eternity, for it is from Him.

It may further be said that eternal life is without anything to end it from within itself. Disease as well as violence destroys the present physical life. Imperfection makes that which is imperfect perishable. Corruption is the element and source of decay. But eternal life is the progress and consummation of a life begun on earth by a new birth from God, and has in it no element of evil. It comes through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." * There is nothing in the life thus begotten in the soul to bring it to an end, nothing to create decay or to produce unhappiness. It is a life not only in the favour of God, but also in likeness to God, so that it will last for ever. Life here, burdened, imperfect, polluted as it is, is generally, perhaps always, more or less a thing of pleasure ; but what will life be without a burden, without a

* 1 John iii. 6.

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sorrow, without sin, without imperfection, for ever ? Here, where all flesh is grass, and life is constantly exposed to evil and sadness, to live is a blessing ; but what will it be to have the power of endless life, beyond the reach of sin and the range of Satan's power—life in God's friendship and image, where no evil can injure and no storm sweep the sky, world without end !

II. Surely it is most important to know how this life can be reached and realized. Observe the grand principle in which it consists—the knowledge of God and Christ. "*This is life eternal.*" It is not that this knowledge merely leads to this life, or points out the way to attain it ; the life itself consists in this knowledge—"the knowledge, love, and enjoyment of Him who is infinite, being Himself infinite." God and Christ are the objects of this knowledge. The form of the expression, "*Know Thee the only true God,*" has been taken by some critics as excluding at once, from Christ's own lips, the fact of His supreme Divinity. But the Father is not here called "the true God" as in contrast with the Son, but in opposition to the many false deities of the world's worship. He

is represented as the only living, real, and self-existent God. Christ, as the Son, addresses the Father, speaks as the Mediator and Servant of the Father, not referring to His own Godhead, but ascribing supremacy and glory to the Father alone. When, in reply to the young man who asked, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ Jesus said, "Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God,"* it would be quite wrong to infer that Jesus meant to convey that He Himself was not good and was not Divine. So it is equally wrong to make any such inference here. In truth, an inference of a totally opposite character is to be drawn; for with no propriety and on no condition could it be said that eternal life consists in the knowledge of the only true God and a mere creature; no creature could thus be placed on the level with the supreme Jehovah. The juxtaposition of Jesus Christ in this connexion with the Father, and the knowledge of both being together defined to be eternal life, is the strongest inferential evidence of the Godhead of the Son,

* Luke xviii. 18; Matt. xix. 16—30.

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our Saviour and Lord. Life is in this knowledge of God and Christ, not merely the knowledge of the truth about God and Christ; this is involved, but much more that this; life is in personal acquaintance with God and Christ. But why does Jesus, as Mediator, thus make the knowledge of Himself essential to life? For at least two reasons: (1) because the Father can be known only through the Son; and (2) known as gracious towards mankind only in Him. We can only see "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* No man "knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him;"† "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."‡ The knowledge of God, which as fallen, sinful creatures we need, cannot be found in the stars of heaven, nor in the waves of the sea, nor in the rocks and mountains of the earth, nor in the beautiful flowers of the field, although all these, His lower works, proclaim His eternal power and Godhead; it can be found in Christ alone, who came to be the true

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Matt. xi. 27.

‡ John i. 18.

Revelation and the living Representative of God amongst men. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."* The glory, perfection, character, and will of the Father are displayed through Christ, and can be fully known by us as seen in Him. Hence the knowledge which is life eternal is of God and Christ, of God in Christ, of God through Christ. How vain and foolish are the ideas of those who think they can know all that is needful for them to know about God from the works of creation, while they reject the revelation of Christ, His incarnate Son. As different in nature and in influence as a pale moonbeam on a frosty night is from the radiance of the summer sun at midday, so different is the knowledge of God which is gathered from nature to that which is found in Jesus Christ. The one is compatible with sterility, coldness, and death; the other is vivifying, inspiring, transforming.

But we must not suppose that the knowledge of God, in which eternal life consists, is bare intellectual knowledge. It is not the attainment of

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

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diligent study, or the result of human intelligence ; not apprehension, or speculation, or imagination respecting the Divine Being, but the conscious possession of God, the highest possible attainment to men. The words *know* and *known* are often used in Scripture in a profound sense. "If any man love God, the same is known of Him." * "Then shall I know even as I am known." † "Now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?" ‡ How profound must be the sense in which to know God and Christ is life eternal—deeper far than human thought can fathom or words express! It involves the spiritual perception of God in Christ. There can be no real knowledge of the Divine Being without this, in the first place ; and yet this is what men do not naturally possess or care for. Certain truths about God may be seen by man in many ways and everywhere ; but the spiritual perception of God Himself can only be reached in Christ. We must see Him in the person of His only begotten Son coming down to us as our reconciled and reconciling Father, and

* 1 Cor. viii. 3.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

‡ Gal. iv. 9.

bringing us deliverance as our redeeming God. We must see His glory veiled, and at the same time His authority and grace triumphant, in the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Only thus shall we be able to say with the ancient patriarch, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." *

This knowledge further involves spiritual submission to God, or as it might be said, the personal reception of Him. The soul of man was formed as a living temple for God, and in it He once reigned supreme. Sin banished Him from it, yet in infinite grace He seeks to return to His dwelling in us, that we may know Him and live. Only to the soul that receives Him will He reveal His glory. Hence the Saviour says to the Laodiceans, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." † Again He says to all His disciples, "If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make

* Job xlii. 5, 6.

† Rev. iii. 20.

our abode with him.”* Until, therefore, we yield ourselves to God, and receive Him as the guest of our being, we cannot fully know Him as He is to be known, and as He desires to be known. To all who receive Him, He manifests Himself as He does not unto the world; and this revelation is essential to the knowledge which is life. Thus our knowledge will become a spiritual and experimental acquaintance with God in Christ, and this is what is meant when we are enjoined to “taste and see that God is good.” With respect to our fellow-men we frequently use such language as this—“I scarcely know him,” or “I know him well,” and the phraseology varies according to our acquaintance with the man’s character or our experience of his moral and social qualities. We may believe from report in the generosity of some one to whom we have occasion to apply for sympathy or help; but how different is our estimate or appreciation of his character when we can say from experience that we know it. Abraham believed God and obeyed; but when the Divine promise was fulfilled, and the Divine faithfulness

* John xiv. 23.

proved, the patriarch knew God in a way that he did not know Him before. Thus we are to know Him from our experience, and in our inner consciousness, as our Redeemer, our Father, our God. This is the knowledge that is life, a spiritual, experimental, personal acquaintance with God in Christ, a knowledge which the Holy Spirit alone can impart. It is within our reach, and is the highest attainment for man ; all other knowledge without this will be only as *ignis fatuus* to deceive the soul and lead to the defeat and overthrow of life for ever.

III. How comes it that this true knowledge of God is life? It is not difficult to see a vital connexion between the knowledge and the inestimable blessing to be realized. This knowledge is now eternal life in its germ ; the connexion between them is not a mere logical connexion of word or theory only, but of reality and power. You can see, on a moment's reflection, what connexion there is between knowledge and the energy, elasticity, and enjoyment of our every-day life. It is proverbial, and accepted as an axiom, that "knowledge is power." It has the power of salvation,

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transformation, progress. It is knowledge which lifts up the life of the savage, which civilizes the pagan tribe, which raises degraded humanity from the darkness and misery of brutality to the light and liberty of manhood. The highest knowledge for man must be the highest life: to some extent we can trace this working in various ways.

I. The true knowledge of our heavenly Father involves the communication of influence, and influence flowing forth from God is quickening. Real knowledge cannot be received without a healthful influence on the soul. A penitent child cannot know that his father has forgiven him without feeling emotions of tenderness and joy. We cannot know that anything precious to us is in danger without anxiety or fear being excited in us. Knowledge has thus always an influence on us when it relates to something bearing on ourselves. What, then, must be the influence of the knowledge of the true God, our God and Father! how quickening and transforming! It is when a man comes first to know God in Christ, to know Him as the pardoning God, with whom is plenteous redemption, that he begins to live. The dawning of this knowledge

touches and quickens all the faculties and feelings of our manhood. It is like the bursting forth of the clear shining of the sun upon the plant that has begun to droop and decay in darkness. Petal after petal, leaf after leaf, opens to receive the gladdening ray; new life is imparted, and the flower in all its beauty and fragrance expands to welcome the sun, and in response to his light mingles its sweetness with the air.

2. This knowledge, moreover, promotes fellowship and communion with God, which is life. Before sin entered this world, and man fell, fellowship with his Maker was his privilege and joy. Knowledge was as the chord of life between the finite spirit and the infinite. Through the grace of God in His incarnate Son, this fellowship is restored and life renewed. The more that we know of God, the more will there be of spiritual fellowship; and the more of fellowship, the stronger and sweeter will be the life. It is the communion of the child with his Divine Father. To man, as a social being, fellowship with others is life. The contact of thought with thought, and the communion of affection with affection, are elements of men's true life on earth.

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What, then, must be the fellowship of the soul with God, but life of the highest order? And this fellowship is realized by knowledge, and can only be enjoyed by those who know God in His Son Jesus Christ.

3. Further, this knowledge promotes likeness to God ; and this assimilation to God is the very highest life. The soul is "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."* It is as if knowledge were a chief element of likeness to God, and in a true sense it is so. The Christian is made a partaker of the Divine nature. But how ? It is through knowing God in His precious promises and heavenly grace. Man cannot fully know any of the lower creatures, as he does not possess their nature ; nor can he fully know angelic life, as he is not an angel ; but as a child of God, regenerate and adopted into the Divine family, he knows God ; and this knowledge, cherished and used by us, still further promotes our likeness to our Father, and more fully makes us partakers of the Divine nature. This participation is life, even life for evermore.

* Col. iii. 10.

IV.

THE HEAVENLY GLORIFICATION.

IV.

THE HEAVENLY GLORIFICATION.

“I have glorified Thee on the earth ; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”—JOHN xvii. 4, 5.

IN the fourth verse our Lord appears to present another plea in support of His prayer that He might be glorified. He founds it on the fidelity and completeness with which He had discharged the trust committed to Him on earth. This petition in the fifth verse, for glorification, rises beyond that in the first verse. In the first verse He prayed for glorification here, that He might be borne triumphantly through His sufferings and sacrifice, and raised again from the dead, as the Divine testimony to His success. In this fifth verse He prays for glorification in heaven, that He might be raised in His complex nature to that position of honour and renown which by Divine right belonged to

Him from eternity. And the ground of this request is in the fact that He had fully and faithfully accomplished the work assigned to Him, and had therein glorified the Father. "I have glorified Thee on the earth : glorify Thou me with Thine own self."

It is wonderful, and, at the same time, encouraging to us, that the Son of God should not only pray, but should use arguments for His requests. He orders His cause, and presents His plea before the Father. Thus in all things He was made like unto His brethren—in all things He is our example, in our approach to God and in the work which we have to do for Him here on earth. Two themes are presented for our meditation—Christ's declaration regarding His mediatorial course, and His supplication for His mediatorial crown.

I. Christ's declaration concerning His course on earth is in the words, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." These words contain a breadth and a depth of meaning far beyond our full comprehension. Yet several points readily suggest themselves for thought.

The Saviour calls His mission a work given Him to do. It was not a course of influence, or of teaching only, but of glorious action and godlike enterprise, to which all the powers of His complex nature as Emmanuel were fully consecrated. This work was the redemption of mankind from the power and consequences of sin—a work not to be measured or considered by one solitary act or any series of individual acts. It comprehended the whole of His human history, and included every part of His earthly career, and how much more in His pre-existence we cannot say. Every epoch of His life amongst men was in truth a part of that work. Every word that fell from His lips, every miracle performed by His hand, every pang that rent His heart, went to the completeness of this great and Divine work. He came not into the world to be ministered unto, but to minister, to accomplish the work which the Father had given Him to do. This was His meat and drink, His daily business, His constant delight.

This work assigned to Him was the result of everlasting counsel and Divine arrangement. Long before His advent, in the visions and voices of

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prophecy, it had been declared by the promised Messiah, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." * So that Father, Son, and Spirit, in the adorable Godhead, were alike interested in the accomplishment of Redemption. Yet the work as represented on earth was specially personal to Christ our Lord: "*I have finished the work which Thou gavest ME to do.*" Great undertakings require great qualifications and abilities. Hence this work was laid on One who was mighty, even on the "strong Son of God," who alone could accomplish it. It had to be done by Christ Himself, one in our nature and one who combined with it all the attributes of Divinity in His own person, so that He could say, "I have finished it." The action which it involved was personal action, the conflict was personal conflict, the suffering was personal suffering. It was necessary that He should be truly human, that He should be "spotless, innocent, and pure," that He should be perfectly willing, that He should be Divine. All these qualifications met in Christ Jesus, as the incarnate Son

* Psalm xl. 7, 8; cf. Heb. x. 7.

of God, and in Him alone of all beings in the universe. Therefore the work was given Him to do, and He triumphantly accomplished it.

This world was the scene or sphere of the Saviour's work. "*I have glorified Thee on the earth.*" This was the region in which God had been dishonoured, which sin had blighted, and in which hellish attempts had been made to defeat the governance and tarnish the glory of the Almighty. In heaven He is ever glorified, for there angels and spirits live in perfect and uninterrupted adoration. "In His temple doth every one speak of His glory."* It is on the earth where His authority is denied and defied, and where men refuse to yield to God the glory that is His due. How fitting, then, and how necessary, that here God should be glorified; that here the victory of truth, love, and goodness over sin and hell should be won; that here Christ Jesus should fight our spiritual foes, and redress the wrong which transgression had wrought. Hence our Lord says, "I have glorified Thee on the earth"—on the very place originally so beautiful and so good, on which men have so

* Psalm xxix. 9.

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long been forgetting Thee, dishonouring Thee, blaspheming Thee. And mark what emphasis is laid on the personal element, on His own achievement, "*I have glorified Thee*"—"I have finished the work"—implying that here He alone had glorified God, and that He alone could do the work which had to be done. Adam fell from his original innocence, and thus failed in glorifying God—the grand end of a true and manly life; and all his posterity have followed in his downward course. Jesus Christ alone, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven of all that have ever lived on earth, could say, "I have finished all the work of God, I have glorified the Father."

It is not difficult to see the Divine bearing of the Saviour's course on earth; to discern clearly how it was for the glorification of the Father. This was the highest aspect of the work and mediation of the incarnate Son, although at the same time they had their relation and design in regard to man. His course was a constant acknowledgment of God. In His mediatorial position the thought of the Father was always first. He connected all that He said and all

that He did with the Father, often declaring that He spoke not of Himself and acted not for Himself.* The Father's care, power, and goodness were declared to be everywhere pervading the universe, and seeking the confidence of men. Thus were their minds always directed by Him up to God. Nor less truly was the Saviour's course in the line of perfect obedience to God. For the first time in the history of the world the Divine law in all its extent and spirituality found complete illustration and fulfilment in the life of Christ. In every relation which He sustained as a man He was without sin—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and in all respects perfectly obedient to the will of God. Satan, the prince of evil, came, and found nothing in Him, and as the Holy One of God, His life on earth was most truly glorifying to the Father. In His moral course amongst men we behold the personal revelation of God; for He was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. In Him men beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace

* John xiv. 24; v. 17, 19.

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and truth. As the image of the invisible God, all the perfections of the Divine nature were enshrined in Him, and seen embodied in His human life, so that He could righteously say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." * To be so represented among men brought glory to God in the very highest.

Christ Jesus, however, here speaks of the triumphant completion of His course, even before it was actually closed: "*I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.*" Having reached the last stage of His earthly career, He concludes it by anticipation in His words. It was virtually ended. Having asked to be glorified, He had no doubt of the issue. The end was sure. So far as depended on Himself, all action was now completed; what remained was to be in passive, patient suffering. Yes, it was closed. His active life of ceaseless beneficence and spotless innocence had run its course, and His work was accomplished. Nothing was left out, and no part, through forgetfulness, timidity, or imperfection, was left undone. The accomplishment was per-

* John xiv. 9.

fect. No vainglory breathed in this language of our Lord—"I have glorified Thee on the earth." His words combine the profoundest humility with the loftiest dignity. As doing the work assigned Him by the Father, He avows the Father's glory as the end and object of all that He did, and so indicates that He was the servant of the Father. Not less manifest is the consciousness of dignity in His language—"I have glorified Thee"—I have finished the work." He owns no defect; He makes no apology; He confesses no shortcoming; He asks for no indulgence. And under the shadow of the perfection of this work we may in safety and peace abide. This is our strength and our salvation; every one has an abiding and a vital interest in the declaration of our Lord, that He had glorified the Father, and finished the work given Him to do.

Turn now to the consideration of—

II. The Saviour's request for His mediatorial crown in heaven. *"Now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."* This language refers to glorification hereafter; to the crown and

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reward of our Lord's mediatorial work. He asks for this glory as the fitting crown of His earthly course. We are assured that Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, was crowned with glory and honour."* The words of petition assume several points. (1.) That Christ Jesus had an existence before His appearance on earth. He "was in the beginning with God," † living and reigning with God before time began or the foundations of this world were laid. (2.) That Christ in His pre-existence had Divine glory. He had glory with God before the world was; had it, did not receive it. It was from eternity His by personal right and possession, in virtue of His Godhead. What this glory was, and what it involved, it is impossible for us adequately to comprehend, but it was glory essentially Divine. (3.) That Christ's true and eternal glory, when He became incarnate, was necessarily veiled. In obedience to the Father, though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," ‡ He humbled Himself, put Himself under conditions as a man, took on Him the

* Heb. ii. 9.

† John i. 2.

‡ Phil. ii. 6.

form of a servant, that He might be made like unto His brethren, and through sympathy and suffering become a perfect Saviour. He laid aside for a time and a godlike purpose His heavenly glory, and brought Himself within limitations by taking upon Him our nature; and though in His humiliation glimpses of His grandeur were seen, yet not by the thoughtless world or the carnal eye. He was held "as a root out of a dry ground"—was "despised and rejected of men."* Now He prays that, having accomplished His enterprise, He may resume His majesty, and rise again to His glory in heaven. Can we then conceive what was the glory which was to follow His sufferings, and into which He was about to enter?

1. It involved the enthronement of His person. He prays that as Mediator He might be exalted, that as Emmanuel He might rise to the position which, as the Eternal Word, He held and enjoyed before time began or man was created. With the new element of humanity in His being, added to His Divine nature, He asks that He may rise

* Isa. liii. 2, 3.

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and be enthroned in glory, ascend to the same position of majesty as He occupied with God from eternity. As relating to our nature, this was indeed a marvellous request. He does not think of laying aside that nature now that He has finished the work which had been assigned to Him in it, but that He may take it with Him to the throne which He had occupied with the Father in heaven. What a stimulating truth is this for us! And with what a dignity does it invest our nature! In human society we wish our friends to be welcomed where we ourselves are well received. This is a part of social honour claimed and prized. Now the Son of God had humbled Himself, had laid His glory by, that He might become personally and sympathetically acquainted with our nature, and by assuming it save it from eternal and irretrievable ruin; and having done the work on earth which this enterprise devolved on Him, His love to humanity was so strong that He would not return to heaven without having our nature united still to His own. He wished it to be welcomed in the region and amid the glory from which He had descended. Thus, as God and man

in one person, He would possess the position of elevation and enthronement which He had occupied from eternity with God.

2. This glory involved further the exhibition of His perfection. As He sought to be enthroned in His position and character as Emmanuel, it was essentially necessary that all the hierarchies of heaven, the principalities and powers subject unto Him, should see that His assumption of humanity brought no flaw to His infinite perfection; that His personal glory suffered no abatement from its new association; that He had lost nothing in coming to our rebel world, and into contact with our fallen race, and from appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh. He prays, therefore, that after all His toil and travail on earth are ended, heaven may behold, as before, His Divine perfection, and behold it even radiant with a new lustre, and effulgent with a new honour peculiar to Him as the one Mediator and Grand Reconciler in the universe. To behold His glory is the delight of heaven. To "see Him as He is" is the desire and hope of all the saints. To contemplate His perfection, displaying all moral loveliness as

the brightness of the Father's glory, will be everlasting blessedness. Hence, in the visions of the Apocalypse, we find angels and saints uniting in the new song of adoration to the Redeemer of man, and every creature in heaven singing, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." * This glory, then, for which the Saviour prays, would be the unveiling and display of His ineffable perfection to all the holy intelligences of the universe, so that they might see in the God-man the majesty and glory of the only begotten Son of the Father; the union of the two natures in one person giving intensity to the splendour with which He fills heaven.

3. Finally, this glory involved the establishment and triumph of His kingdom. If the end for which he took our nature upon Him were not realized, how could He be glorified? how could He be satisfied? The complete success of His mission to this world was essential to His glory with the Father in heaven. All that He had

* Rev. v. 13.

undertaken and all that He had done was for the establishment of a new empire, in which a new moral principle should be triumphant, and in which holiness should be universal. Hence, as this kingdom advances, and this principle triumphs, He is glorified on His throne; He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. That glory was to be radiant throughout the universe in the increasing spread of knowledge, holiness, and joy; for He could not be glorified in returning to heaven without the victorious accomplishment of the object for which He had become incarnate, and for which He died on the cross. As the Son of God and the King of kings enthroned on high, His glory is necessarily connected with the extension and final triumph of His kingdom here on earth.

The kingdom of the Messiah is to know no end. Hence every victory of truth, every triumph of righteousness, every trophy of grace, is connected with the glory of Christ in heaven. He sits on the throne, wields the sceptre, wears the crown of the universe—exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins; and as His kingdom comes amongst men, so

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does His glory shine in heaven ; and the song of the "great multitude, which no man could number," advances : "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."*

Such, at least, are some of the things involved in this petition of our Lord for glory with His Father in heaven. The last point bears practically on ourselves ; for the glory of Christ on high, as the Head of the Church and the King of men, is connected with us. He is glorified in the character of His disciples, in their growing likeness to Himself, and devotedness to His cause. All that they are and all that they do should reflect His honour, and bring renown to His name, as evidence of the perfection of His work and the royalty of His power. Is He thus glorified in us ? As our living King and Lord, even the weakest, by devotion, zeal, and love, may help to "crown Him Lord of all."

* Rev. vii. 9, 10.

V.

THE DIVINE INSTRUCTION.

V.

THE DIVINE INSTRUCTION.

“ I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world : Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me ; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me.”—JOHN xvii. 6—8.

WE now come to the second part of this intercessory prayer, or more properly to the intercessory portion of it, in which our Lord brings forward His disciples along with Himself, and presents supplication for them. But before offering any special petition for them, He states several things in connexion with them as preliminary pleas for the blessings which He was about to ask on their behalf. These pleas are contained in the verses which we have now to consider. Their connexion with what has gone before is easily traced.

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Our Lord had said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." Now He tells us what this work more particularly was, and how He fulfilled it. These verses give a more definite description of Christ's ministry among men, especially in relation to His immediate disciples, as a measure or method of proof that the work committed to Him by the Father had been fulfilled.

I. We contemplate first the persons taught, the scholars. There can be no doubt that Christ Jesus refers to the disciples then around Him. They may indeed be viewed as representatives of all others to whom His ministry has been an enlightening and a saving power. The Lord's words regarding them express a threefold relationship—(1) to the world, (2) to God the Father, and (3) to Himself as the Son and Mediator.

Their relation to the world is suggested in the words, "*The men whom Thou gavest me out of the world,*" which convey the twofold idea of an original and an altered position with respect to the world. Originally these disciples, as they came into the world, belonged to it, formed units in ordinary

human society, with tastes, desires, and modes of thinking like the men around them. Their condition, pursuits, and hopes were with the world, and in it. But they had been given "out of the world" to Christ, so that their position in it and their relationship to it were alike changed. When their Lord uttered these words, His disciples were still in the world, and were to continue in it for some time; but henceforth, in a sublime and peculiar sense, they were not to be of it. Their desires, hopes, enjoyments, and aims were no longer to be worldly; for their being had received a new impulse, their hearts a new attraction, and their hopes a new home and centre. So it is with all the people of God; they are given to Christ "out of the world," to be taught and trained for service here and glory hereafter. "Out of the world," no longer of it, and this should be made to appear in the history and character of all who name the name of Christ. But, alas! what a commentary does the conduct of myriads supply on these words, "Out of the world," when the world seems to bound their ambition and contain their all.

The relation of the disciples to God is also here

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pointed out : “ *Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me.*” They belonged to God. He had a Divine and absolute right in them and over them, as He has over all His creatures. They were His by the law of their original creation, by the ties of providential preservation and blessing, and by all the bonds of moral obligation. Jehovah was their Father, their King, their Maker and God. He prepared them for Christ; and as they were amongst those who “looked for redemption in Israel,” they were influenced and moulded by the wise and gracious dispensation of the Father for the kingdom of the Son. They were His as “Israelites without guile.”*

Their relation to Christ Jesus is repeatedly declared. They were given to Him, to be further instructed and prepared for a special and glorious work in the world. The interests of the Father and the Son in them could not be separate, but identical. By giving them to the Son, the Father did not part with His property or His pleasure in them, for they were given to Christ in pursuance

* Lange's Comment. on St. John's Gospel *in loc.* (Clark's For. Theol. Lib.)

of a gracious purpose, and by the arrangements of an all-wise providence. The design was in the mind of the loving Father from the first. It was not by chance that the fishermen of Galilee were brought to hear Jesus Christ, and be attracted by Him. It was not by chance that they were induced to leave their homes, fishing nets, and boats at the sea of Tiberias, and come down the valley of Jordan to John's baptism to hear his testimony and announcement: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* Thus they came to see Jesus Christ, witness some of His miracles, and hear His own words. The discovery of the promised Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth was the realization of their highest hope, the acquisition of their highest joy. That which is often mere accident to men is the wise and beneficent arrangement of a loving Father. Thus the Apostles were given to Christ in fulfilment of mediatorial promise. This was the first small instalment of the promise that Jesus as mediatorial King should have the heathen given Him as His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His pos-

* John i. 29.

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session.* The Messiah was to be King of men, with dominion from sea to sea. All nations are to serve Him, and the isles are to wait for His law; and here was the beginning of this dominion; these disciples were the firstfruits of a mighty ingathering of souls. As representative men, they were given to the Saviour to be trained for His service, and prepared to be wise master-builders in laying the foundations of His glorious kingdom. With what cordiality would the Son of God welcome men so prepared for His instruction—men who had been sanctified by His Father, and made ready to receive Him as the Messiah, their Master and Lord, in a world that was to reject and crucify Him. Yet, with equal cordiality and joy does He welcome now to His church and kingdom every soul that is wishful to learn, every heart that is willing to give itself to Him. What did Jesus teach them? What truth did He specially convey to them?

II. Consider the instruction given. *"I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world. I have given unto*

* Ps. ii. 8.

them the words which Thou gavest me." Generally, then, the instruction given in all that Christ Jesus said and did was the manifestation of the Divine name to these disciples. The name of God is often put for God Himself, for His being, His character, and attributes. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe;" and as proclaimed to Moses on Mount Sinai, that "name" was a revelation of God, a declaration of His attributes and perfections.* How often in aspects of attraction and grace is the name of God put before men in His word. There He presents Himself as *Jehovah-jireh*, ever ready to provide for the wants and to mitigate the woes of His people; as *Jehovah-nissi*, ever willing to defend them and lead them to victory in the great battle of life; as *Jehovah-tsidkenu*, working out and bringing near to them an all-sufficient righteousness for their salvation; as *Jehovah-shammah*, blessing with His presence every spot to which His providence may bring them in their pilgrimage through this world. But it was Jesus Christ who manifested the Divine name in all its fulness of

* Prov. xviii. 10; Exod. xxxiv. 5—7.

glory. To Him especially we owe the revelation of God as a Father. He was the only begotten Son, and delighted to unfold and illustrate the Divine character to the children of men. This was at once His mediatorial duty and His personal enjoyment. How did He manifest the Father's name to His disciples? In various ways.

I. By what He was. He came to be the representative amongst men of the infinite God. He was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person"—"the image of the invisible God"—such a revelation of Jehovah as the world had never seen, as even angels looked on with fresh adoration and new delight. In the person and character of Christ Jesus the disciples had a complete manifestation of the character and attributes of God. As they looked on Him they saw the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, so that His marvellous wisdom, almighty power, surpassing grace, and unwearied benevolence, were but the expression and evidence of the fulness of the Godhead that dwelt within Him bodily. Hence, when one of His disciples once said to Him, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," He

well and truly replied, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Every element of the Divine glory had its perfect and practical embodiment in Him, so that in His personal history we have a living map of the boundless expanse of the Divine perfections reduced to the scale which our humanity can contemplate and study. Thus Jesus lived amongst men, moved and mingled in human society, spoke and acted, laboured and taught, as "God with us." We miss the power and glory of His life if we do not see in Him this perfect and personal manifestation of the Divine Being.

2. By what He said, no less than by what He was, did He manifest the Father's name: "*I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me.*" In all His teaching He delighted to unfold and illustrate the character of the Father, and the words which He spake were heavenly, authoritative, divine. Every considerable human teacher has some theme or some aspect or bearing of a subject with which he is more especially familiar, to which his own taste inclines him, and on which he loves chiefly to dilate. Christ Jesus was master of all truth, but especially did He dwell on the

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glory and excellence of the Father's character. He always sought to lead the affections, desires, and thoughts of men up to God, and laid the whole realm of nature under tribute to show forth His praise. By proverbs and parables, by social facts and human relationships, by the events of providence and the marvels of creation, He aimed to prove the paternal character and the boundless beneficence of God. From the great and rich treasury of the domestic affections, and from the varied fields and the most familiar features of nature, He drew forth illustrations of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Almighty. Nothing was overlooked, nothing forgotten, and nothing regarded as unimportant, which could exhibit any attribute or aspect of His infinite perfection. He made the lily of the valley speak of the Father's amazing skill, and the sparrow on the housetop bear testimony to the Father's heavenly care. He appealed to every drop of rain and dew, to every beam of sunshine, to every fragrant flower, and to every growing ear of corn, to illustrate and testify the goodness, omnipotence and love of the Supreme. In nature and in providence, and espe-

cially in His own mission to a sinful and thankless world, Jesus found evidence and argument to uphold and enforce His manifestation of the name of God. He spoke of the Father's increasing energy throughout creation, of His systematic benevolence in sustaining all things which He has made, of His infinite mercy and love in the gift of His only begotten Son to give His life a ransom for our ruined race. He declared that as the brazen serpent was lifted up by Moses for the healing of the wounded and dying Israelites, so by the will and love of God was He Himself to be lifted up for the salvation of a lost world. He ever taught that all goodness was in God, and that all goodness flowed forth from Him, in order that men might seek Him and trust Him as their Father and Almighty Friend.

3. By that which He did, Jesus Christ also manifested the name of God. He went about doing good. He pleased not Himself, but found His meat and drink in doing His Father's will for the welfare and blessedness of men. As His words were not His own, but His Father's, so also were His works. Often did He declare that

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His miracles of mercy, His deeds of love, His acts of grace, His displays of power, were the doings of the Father, in Him and by Him. "If I do not the works of my Father," said He to the Jews, "believe me not."* "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."† As we see Him stop the bier on which the dead was borne to burial, and give back to the widow her only son; or see Him stand by the grave of Lazarus and weep, even though about to summon the corpse from the tomb, and give the brother back alive to the sorrowing sisters; or hear Him say, in words of authority and tenderness to the blind, the infirm, the diseased, and the demoniac, "Go thy way: thy faith hath saved thee;" as we behold Him walk on the stormy waves, and hear Him with a word hush the tempest to a calm; as we see Him turn the water into wine at a wedding feast, or bid the fish in the lake yield money to the disciples to enable them to pay the necessary tribute, we see and hear the evidence and utterance of the God of nature and of grace. When we consider Christ's daily ministry and work when

* John x. 37.

† *Ibid.* v. 17.

He was on earth, and contemplate what He had come to do in making His soul an offering for sin, and giving Himself a ransom for many, we see most fully and impressively the highest manifestation of the name and character of God, and the confirmation of His word when He said, "I and my Father are one."* "The Father is in me, and I in Him."† This was the grand lesson that He taught His disciples. Without this instruction, what could they have known of God to give them rest, or hope, or joy? "Let not your heart be troubled," He said: "ye believe in God, believe also in me."‡ All our saving, practical knowledge of God we owe to the manifestation of His character in and through Christ. In Him the eternal and infinite God has come down to us, and we can learn the lesson of the Divine goodness, grace, and glory only as we sit at the feet of Jesus Christ.

The disciples, though slow of heart and understanding, profited by the Saviour's teaching; for He speaks of—

III. The attainments made by them. "*I have*

* John x. 30.

† *Ibid.* x. 38.

‡ *Ibid.* xiv. 1.

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given unto them the words which Thou gavest me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me." "*They have kept Thy word."* "*They have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee."* Here we have various points indicated as results of the Divine Master's instruction.

There was the acceptance of Christ's words. "They have received them." Even His enemies who sought to ensnare Him in His teaching were constrained to say, "Never man spake like this man." And if His words commanded the attention and admiration of His foes, much more might be expected of His disciples; they devoutly received His words. Attention was not enough, admiration was not enough, mere assent was not enough: the words of Jesus dropped into the souls of these disciples as divine seeds of thought, germs of higher life and hope. They not only listened; though slow of heart to believe, yet because He taught them as they were able to bear, they received into their inmost souls the truths which He spake as the life and stay of

their inner being. They felt and knew something of the force of His own declaration, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."* In the days of His flesh, multitudes heard His words without receiving them. So, alas! do many hear them now. If we are to profit by them, they must be lodged in our souls as the incorruptible seed of the kingdom, to germinate and bring forth fruit in us to life eternal.

The disciples, moreover, had some apprehension of the Divine glory of Christ: "*They have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee;*" they "*have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me.*" Thus, as the result of His teaching and of His manifestation of the Divine name, they apprehended to some extent His glory, and acknowledged it. They recognized the Divinity of His doctrine. In all that He said, they found superhuman and heavenly wisdom. The very expressions which fell from His lips spoke of God to their inner consciousness, and they felt that He had the words of eternal life. Whence could such

* John vi. 63.

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truths as He spake come, but from the Father? They believed with Nicodemus and such as he, not only that Jesus was a teacher come from God, but they felt that the words which He spoke, and the truths which He uttered, were the words and truth of God; for they had in them the glow and glory of Divinity. They recognized also the Divinity of His person: "*They have known surely that I came out from Thee.*" He that could teach such truth about God, and do such works, and produce such impressions, must have come out from the Father. This was their inference—a personal knowledge gathered from all that they heard and saw. Peter, as the mouthpiece of the rest of the Apostles, could truly say, "We believe and are sure that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."* They were feeble scholars, slow to learn, often hesitating, and making many mistakes about the true nature of Christ's kingdom and the real character of His mission; yet they had glimpses of His glory, so that they rejoiced in it as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Hence, though

* John vi. 69.

they might not clearly understand its nature, they could not but recognize the Divinity of His mission. "*They have believed that Thou didst send me.*" They believed what He told them. It was at first a matter of faith to them that the Father had sent Him, and it came to be a matter of spiritual knowledge that He was Divine. They mistook, indeed, for a long time, the true nature and glorious design of His sojourn amongst men ; but they recognized its divinity, and believed with all their hearts that the Father had sent Him to do the work appointed for the Messiah to do. This apprehension of the glory of Christ Jesus is in truth the highest attainment for men on earth, even as the contemplation and study of it will be of the blessedness of heaven. To discover Christ and trust in Him is the triumph and turning-point of any human life here. We know little—nothing that is saving—if we do not know Him ; but if we have the knowledge of Christ, and see something of His redeeming grace and beauty, then a vast field of glorious and blessed research is open to us. This is the pearl of great price, the discovery of which makes a man rich and wise for ever.

Further, the disciples clung to Christ; they maintained adherence to His truth. *"They have kept Thy word."* The word of God was, as we have seen, the word of Christ, and to keep the one was to keep the other. Continuance was essential, as it is still. To keep God's word was to obey it, walk in it, and abide by it. Our Lord's disciples kept it. Unlike many who gladly received it and cherished it for a season, but soon cast it from them, they held it fast. They were neither stony-ground hearers nor wayside hearers. The truth sank into their souls, and abode there, for the Saviour taught them as they were able to bear. On one occasion, when He saw many of His disciples leaving Him because they were offended with His doctrine, He turned to "the twelve," and asked, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go?" was Peter's noble reply for himself and his brethren. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." They had many trials, temptations, and difficulties, and though they often showed their spiritual weakness and moral imperfection, they continued faithful in their devotion to their Master, with one sad exception. Christ will

not acknowledge any as His disciples who do not keep His word and endure unto the end. His truth is to be kept as the most precious deposit in the soul, as a heavenly light to the mind, as the holiest power on the life, as the truest solace in the heart, as the Divine principle of character—and to be kept in the face of all difficulty, opposition, and danger. Thus only can men prove themselves the true disciples of the Saviour, show their attainments under His instruction, and rise with Him in His kingdom, to share in His glory for ever. “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”* These first disciples “received in faith Christ’s words which He gave them. From this *trust* in the Divine words *confided* to them by Him there sprang a true cognition of *the Divine nature of Christ*, and thereby a belief in His Divine mission to the world.”† In this way our Lord defines the process of development exhibited in their conversion out of the world.

* Heb. iii. 14.

† Lange’s “Comment. on St. John’s Gospel,” vol. ii, p. 299. (T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.)

VI.

THE MEDIATORIAL PLEA.

VI.

THE MEDIATORIAL PLEA.

“ I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me ; for they are Thine. And all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine ; and I am glorified in them.”
—JOHN xvii. 9, 10.

OUR Lord had passed from special prayer for Himself to the case of His disciples, and having referred to what He had done for them, and what they had learned of Him, He proceeds to pray for them, making an emphatic announcement of the gracious fact, and assigning a reason for it. At the commencement of His personal ministry our Lord promised to confess His true disciples before His Father in heaven.* This He now begins to fulfil in their hearing, that they might have another evidence of His faithfulness and affection. Two points are here suggested for consideration.

* Matt. x. 32.

I. There is a gracious announcement: "*I pray for them*"—the disciples to whom He had specially unfolded the will and name of the Father. The words which follow seem at first startling: "*I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me.*" Does He mean that the world had no place in His thoughts or desires? that it formed no object of His supplications? that He had no room in His heart for the sorrows and woes of men generally? No, this cannot be His meaning. He that had said, "Go so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"* could not shut that world out of His thought and regard. He that was so soon to pray on the cross for His murderers, in the touching and memorable words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," would not and could not refuse to pray for the world of mankind at large. We must not allow human systems of theology or the deductions of mere human reasoning to interpret for us the living words of our Lord, as has too often been

* John iii. 16.

done—as if the Saviour of purpose excluded from His concern and prayer the very world for which He had come to suffer and die.

No, it is simply as if He had on this occasion said, “I am not now at this moment praying for the world at large, but for my disciples whom Thou gavest me.” His thoughts at the time were for them, and He wished to present them by themselves to the Father, that attention and care might be bestowed on them, and that all needful blessings might be supplied to them. Another idea also is suggested, as if Christ had said, “I pray not thus, I pray not in this way, for the world.” For the world He does pray in this service of supplication as we see in verses 20 and 21; but He prays, so to speak, in another manner. His prayer for the world is altogether of a different character from that for the Church. In praying for the world, He asks that it may cease to be what it is, that it may attain to knowledge which it does not possess, and realize a life which it does not know; while in praying for the Church and for His disciples around Him, He asks that they may be perfected in what they have received, con-

firmed in their faith, and so preserved from forgetting or losing that which they know. It is the latter only—prayer for the disciples—that is the Saviour's object here. He certainly does not exclude the world from His consideration and care, but simply says, "I am not praying now for the world, but for my disciples."

"I pray for them"—the words are full alike of glory and of goodness. He who had left the realms of bliss for man, who was from eternity rich in all the greatness and wealth of the Godhead, who had humbled Himself and taken upon Him the form of a servant; He in whom these disciples had beheld glimpses of the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, and who had drawn them to Himself by the fulness of grace and truth which dwelt in Him; He says, "I pray for them." He who had taught them as they were able to bear, who had patiently borne with them in their shortcomings and their slowness to learn, and who nevertheless clung to their sympathy and sought their confidence and love as a solace to Himself, He says, "I pray for them." The force and beauty of the word *pray* used by our Lord are not seen by

the ordinary English reader. It is a word which Christ Jesus alone uses in relation to His prayers, and is in no single instance used in the New Testament to express the prayer of man to God, of the creature to the Creator.* The Saviour never uses in relation to His own prayers, and in respect to that which He asks from God for His disciples, the word ordinarily used to express prayers by man,† but another, which has the sense of authority in it, and which therefore it is not proper for us to use.‡ “The consciousness of His equal dignity, of His potent and prevailing intercession, speaks out in this, that often as He asks, or declares that He will ask, anything of the Father,” it is always this word which He uses, and which expresses an asking upon equal terms. How much, then, is involved in this announcement of our Lord, “I pray for them”! Frequently in the course of social intercourse we say to a friend in difficulty, in perplexity, in affliction or want, when we feel that our poor thoughts, counsels, or help can be of little or no avail, “I will pray for you.” How

* Trench's Synonyms of the Greek New Testament, sect. xl.

† αἰτέω.

‡ ἐρωτάω.

much do we comprehend in that? Does it not include the highest thought, and the most effective aid that we can reach? Does it not mean that we shall ask for every blessing which the nature of the case demands, which our friend in his circumstances can need, and which our heavenly Father in His infinite wisdom and boundless grace may see meet to bestow? What magnitude and depth of meaning, then, must there be in our Saviour's word, "I pray for you!" We cannot conceive indeed all that it contains. But we may see how faithful, how enduring, how discriminating, was His love. He prayed for His disciples. Their slowness of heart to believe had not exhausted His patience; their weakness had not wearied Him, their ignorance had not turned Him from them in contempt or alienation. They had been His friends and companions, while others had rejected Him. He had come unto His own, and the nation as a whole received Him not, but His disciples had been His loving, loyal servants, and He could not forget them nor their need. So He confessed them before His Father, and commended them to His special care and grace.

It was good and blessed to be under the shadow and shield of such a prayer: it was a canopy of glory which would be an unfailing defence, a fountain of blessing which could never be exhausted. The Lord who prayed for these disciples intercedes for His people now. There is not a single day of our life, how full soever of duty or difficulty, or even darkness, it may be, in which we may not derive encouragement and comfort from the gracious word of Christ, "I pray for them." By faith you may hear Him say it for you, O Christian, whatever may be your earthly lot or circumstances. Are you in perplexity, with beclouded prospects and few friends, not knowing how to get out of your difficulty or direct your course? Look up; there is One Friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and He says, "I pray for thee." Are you in affliction, with days and weeks and months of weakness and pain measured out to you? Look up, and hear your Saviour say, "I pray for thee." Are you in sorrow, with heart and home rendered desolate by bereavement, and are you refusing to be comforted? Look up to Him who wept by the grave of Lazarus,

His friend, and hear Him say, "I pray for thee," "My grace is sufficient for thee." He who prayed for Peter amidst his failing faith, and who prayed for Paul under the buffetings of Satan, is your Advocate and Intercessor; and touching all His faithful followers He says, "I pray for them." How great the blessedness, how high the privilege, of being within the compass and covert of such prayer!

II. Jesus gives a reason in explanation of His praying thus specially for His disciples: "*I pray for them, for (because) they are Thine; and all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.*" The reason here assigned may be regarded as twofold; *first*, His Father's interest in the disciples, and *secondly*, His own. In the previous verses Christ had said, "Thine they WERE, and Thou gavest them me;" and to show that this donation or gift of the Father to the Son did not in any sense abrogate the Father's proprietorship, Jesus now says, "They ARE Thine," and adds a profound statement regarding the mutual and reciprocal interest of the Father and the Son.

I. The reason then why the Saviour prayed for

the disciples was that they belonged to God—"They are Thine." He had created them, called them into being, and given them all their capabilities and powers. He had selected them also for the position which they occupied. Out of the many thousands of Israel, He had given them for a special purpose, in connexion with the history of the world, to His Son, to be trained by Him. Thus all their qualifications were from Him, so that in every sense it was true that they belonged to God, and emphatically were His. The preparation, influence, and impress which they received under the ministry of Christ Jesus, and in fellowship with Him, were altogether of God; and the very variety of their dispositions and temperaments, qualifying them for varied service and duty, was due to His wisdom and power. The loving gentleness of John, the generous impulsiveness of Peter, the modesty of Bartholomew, were all of God, and all designed to work for good in the kingdom of the Messiah. Every tie that could bind men to their heavenly Father and Almighty Friend bound these disciples to God. The response due to His claim and proprietorship conferred on them a

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dignity higher than all beside. It is one thing to be God's creatures, made originally in His image ; it is much higher and grander to be God's men, created anew in Christ Jesus, restored again to the image of their Maker, and made partakers of the Divine nature. The fishermen of Galilee, in all their poverty, simplicity, and illiteracy, were looked down upon by the great ones of this world, but Christ had a different standard by which to estimate them, and in His view they were specially and truly God's. With what force and pathos, therefore, might the Saviour pray for them, since God's property and interest in them formed a ground of His prayer!

This interest was reciprocal: "*All mine are Thine, and Thine are mine.*" In the Father's interest the Son had an interest, and in the Father's property the Son had an equal right. Thus our Lord ever presents the truth respecting Himself; He had no separate interest from the Father, and the Father had no separate interest from the Son. "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* Every

* John v. 19.

man in addressing God may truly say, "All mine are Thine ;" but no creature can say with propriety or truth, "All Thine are mine." The ability to say this includes the attributes and glory of Godhead. In the essential unity of the Father and the Son, whatever is possessed by the one is possessed by the other, so that the words of the Saviour are absolutely true. So also are they relatively true ; for in the mediatorial economy of redemption all that the Son hath belongs to the Father, and all that the Father hath belongs to the Son. The Creator has committed all things to Christ, and has laid the government upon His shoulder. Christ reconciles and redeems all things, and restores them in purity and perfection to God the Father. Hence we see the Son's partnership in the Father's property adds force to His prayer for those who in so many ways and so manifestly belong to God. No language could more impressively show the Godhead and glory of Christ Jesus than this claim of kindred interests with the infinite and eternal King.

2. But this is not all. Jesus Christ, as Mediator and Saviour, had an interest in these disciples

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peculiar to Himself, and our Lord adduces this as another reason of His prayer for them: "*I am glorified in them.*" It may well excite our wonder and adoration that He, "without whom was not anything made that was made," should have glory in feeble, ignorant, and imperfect men, as His disciples were. Yet He here makes the avowal; and if we look around amongst the men who heard His words and saw His works in Judea or Galilee, from whom besides His disciples had He glory? As the Messiah of God and the Saviour of men, He was not glorified in the Pharisees, who blasphemed Him; or in the scribes, who despised Him; or in the people, who at one time were ready to hail Him as a king, and at another ready to crucify Him. Only in the little band who knew something of His work, who saw some glimpses of His glory and beauty, and who had given themselves to Him as their Lord and Master, was He glorified. The life and attractiveness of the vine are in its branches, foliage, and fruit; and as Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," His honour was essentially connected with them, as the firstfruits of a multitude of followers which

no man will be able to number, out of all lands. He had therefore a special personal reason for His prayer on their behalf.

How was the Lord Jesus glorified in these disciples? Had they not received Him to their hearts when their countrymen at large had rejected Him? They had forsaken all to follow Him, and stood forth on His side when the whole world was against Him. They had many imperfections, were slow to learn, and slow of heart to believe; but amidst all weaknesses they were His loyal and loving disciples. He was "all in all" to them—the Lord of their hearts, the King of their consciences, and the Arbiter of their destinies. Their thoughts, affections, desires, and hopes were bound up in Him. To draw men to Himself, to secure their allegiance and devotedness for God, that they might be redeemed from sin, and be made partakers of the Divine nature, was the very purpose for which He came into the world; and in these disciples, who were lovingly drawn around Him as the firstfruits of His incarnation and advent, was He glorified. They loved Him, they adored Him, they trusted Him, they served Him, they were

ready to die for Him. They were the heralds of His cause, the messengers of His truth to the world; and as they cannot be viewed apart from their mission, the Saviour saw in them, and in their work for His kingdom, the advancement of His glory on the earth. As the champions of His cause and His first triumphs amongst men, He was "glorified in them."

There is a depth and a breadth of meaning in these words which we cannot fully comprehend. When the victor, who has been the hero of many battles, receives the thanks of a grateful country and the highest honours from his sovereign, and the plaudits of parliament, says in reply, "that he could have nothing but for the bravery and devotion of the troops under his command," we can appreciate his modesty, and admire his candour. But when the strong Son of God says, "I am glorified in them,"—these my disciples, few, weak, and imperfect though they be,—we cannot refuse our homage, our admiration, and our love. Inspiring truth! He who prays to the Father, "Glorify Thou me," "Glorify Thy Son," says of His disciples, "I am glorified in them." This may well

strengthen the faith and enkindle the enthusiasm of His followers in every age. "As Christ's property, they are the property of God; as God's property, they are the property of Christ; and since He is glorified in them, the glory of Christ, which is the glory of God, must be protected in them."* Hence our Lord says, "I pray for them." What an encouragement is there in this fact for us to pray! Jesus knows our need infinitely better than we ourselves, and He prays for us as our Advocate with the Father. His people are never forgotten by Him, are never beyond the reach of His sympathy and help. He makes intercession for all who come unto God by Him. Shall we not then be allowed to pray? Nor is this all. Our Saviour's words, "I am glorified in them," supply a holy incitement to labour. Even in our fallen condition, and with our imperfect endeavours, we may live so as to glorify Christ. There may be much in our character and in our work to cause us shame, yet even then the Master may say of us, "I am glorified in them." Should not this

* Lange's Comment. on St. John's Gospel *in loc.*, vol. ii., p. 300. (Clark's For. Theol. Lib.)

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in flame our zeal and inspire us to effort? He recognizes and acknowledges even the cup of cold water given in His name to a needy disciple. To glorify Him will be the brightest lustre around the character, and a glory to make us shine as stars in the firmament for ever.

VII.

*THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE
NAME.*

VII.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE NAME.

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”—JOHN xvii. 11.

OUR Lord here advances to some of the specific objects of His intercessory prayer. He was about to leave His disciples in a world of sin, opposition, and danger; and He asks for them the power and protection of the Father, which would be needed on their behalf. We have here, then, an “urgent, provident petition,”* with a motive or an argument for granting it. We must consider first—

I. The contemplated condition of the disciples, the peculiar ground of their need. “*I am no more*

* Lange’s Crit. Doct. and Homilet. Comment. *in loc.* (Clark’s ed.)

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in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee." The fact of His going to the Father, with whom He had been from eternity, and from whom He had come forth for a gracious and a godlike purpose, could not but be to Him a satisfaction and joy. "I come to Thee." He had stepped forth visibly on the stage of time to do the Father's will; He had delighted to come to carry out the Father's pleasure; and now the prospect of returning to the glory which He had with the Father before the world's creation was to Him an element of gratification and gladness. But He could not forget His disciples whom He had called around Him in this world, who had been His companions and friends during His public ministry. His thoughts went forth to them and to their condition on this earth without His bodily presence, on which they had been so much accustomed to lean, and to which they constantly looked for all that they required of guidance and strength. His words suggest the thought of their bereavement: "*I am henceforth no more in the world.*" They were to lose sight of Him, their Master and Almighty Friend; and His departure could not

fail to be to them at first, as they felt it, the severest and saddest bereavement. They would no longer see His face or hear His voice as they had been wont to do. With such imperfect views as they had of His mission and kingdom, much of their strength and comfort depended on His visible presence with them. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn," said Jesus, "so long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."*

It is impossible for us to form an adequate conception of what the loss of Christ's visible presence would, for a time at least, be to them. We ourselves may firmly believe in the heavenly life of some beloved object whom death has taken from us, and would not dare to wish that object back again on earth; while at the same time the voice which is no longer heard, the face no longer seen, the empty chair, and the absent form, may create within us a desolation of heart, and make us very sad. Now Jesus Christ had been all in all to these disciples. They seemed to live only in His

* Matt. ix. 15.

presence. In doubt, or difficulty, or danger, they instinctively appealed to Him, and looked up to Him. He was their Master, who had called them from their nets to follow Him; He was their Teacher, who had given them views of God and truth such as they had never seen before; He was their Friend, whose wise counsel, holy love, and faithful instruction drew their hearts by the cords of the strongest affection. He was the Christ of God and their Saviour, in whom they looked for redemption, triumph, and glory. He was all their salvation and all their desire. As men, they had been attracted to Him by all that could entwine their affections and elevate their souls; as Jews, they trusted in Him that it was He who should deliver Israel, and restore their fatherland to its pristine liberty and glory; as sinners, they looked to Him as the Lamb of God, who had come to take away the sin of the world. And now He was about to leave them. How great the darkness and desolation to them in such bereavement we can hardly conceive. Therefore He prays for them.

His words, moreover, suggest the thought of

their exposure: "*These are in the world*"—an ungodly, careless, unbelieving, unholy world. Jesus their Lord knew well what it was to be in the world; hence His concern at their exposure in it. They had been given to Him "out of the world," and now they were to be left in it, surrounded by its influences and exposed to its temptations. He had just told them that in the world they were to have tribulation;* and as it had been to the Master, so doubtless it would be to the servants; as it had hated and persecuted Him, so it would feel and act towards them. They would be exposed to sharp trial from its spirit of opposition to all holiness; they would be exposed to danger from its manifold temptations and allurements. What had they to expect from a self-righteous nation and a godless generation, but scorn, contempt, cruelty, and suffering? The very words of our Lord present a picture of desolateness which excites our sympathy for the disciples. Christ Himself had been denounced as a deceiver; had been charged with being in league with the devil; had been misrepresented, calumniated, slandered,

* John xvi. 33.

and made to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself. All that He felt and knew the world to be was in His holy mind when He said, "*These are in the world, and I come to Thee ;*" and His heart prompts Him to ask for them the preserving love and protecting care of the Father.

Christ Jesus, in His bodily and visible presence, is absent from the world still, but His disciples are in it. It is well to know that His prayer and intercession for them are better than His human presence. From His exalted throne in glory He sees His followers battling in the world with many foes, and in dangers oft. Just as of old, when on the mountain-top alone in communion with God, His thought and sympathy were with His disciples toiling on the sea at midnight, and contending with the violence of the storm, He provided for their rescue and safety ; so does He see all His disciples now : they are never out of His gracious presence, never beyond the reach of His protecting arm in the darkest night or in the fiercest storm.

" He bends on earth a brother's eye,"

and prays the Father for their preservation and

safety. And here, struggling with temptation, striving to please Christ our Master, fighting with sin, resisting the devil, and often oppressed with fear, how cheering is the assurance that the eye of our Saviour is upon us, that His heart is full of sympathy towards us, and that He is our Advocate with the Father.

II. The blessing requested for the disciples :
“ *Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me.*” What is the precise import of this petition? Here, for the first and the only time recorded in the New Testament, Jesus addresses God as Holy Father. It is as if in this petition He appealed to the holiness of God ; and surely no appeal could be more appropriate and beautiful, when preservation from the world and from evil was asked for. The holiness of the Father was in marked contrast to the unholiness of the world. In the infinite holiness of God there was the Divine security, so to speak, that the disciples would be kept. Holiness is the halo of unutterable splendour which surrounds the nature and character of the Almighty. This very designation suggests at once the power and the

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disposition of the Father to keep these disciples. It was the pledge of their preservation, and it is the guarantee of the safe keeping of all God's children now. There is no character in which with more confidence and hope can we approach Jehovah, and address Him, than as "Holy Father;" and with adoration and joy may we give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, as the saints are summoned to do.*

Two remarks are here necessary touching the terms which our Lord uses in this petition. Our English version says, "*Keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me,*" but the preposition in the original is *in*,† the same as that used in the following verse, where Christ says, "I kept them in Thy name." It is more accurate therefore to take the same rendering here, and to read, "*Keep in Thine own name,*" etc. Some

* Ps. xxx. 4 ; xcvi. 12.

† *εν* : "the specific sphere in which they are to remain through being so kept : the name of the Father is made known to them, and with a happy result : thus are they to persevere in *His* living acquaintance and believing confession, not to depart out of this holy element of their life."—*Meyer's Crit. and Exeget. Handbook to the Gospel of John in loc.* (Clark's ed.)

consider the meaning to be, "Keep through Thy name," by Thy power, those whom Thou hast given me, keep them by Thy grace. Others think it is, "Keep them for Thy sake, Thy name's sake on account of the holiness and glory of Thy name." But the full meaning suggested by *in* is deeper and wider than either of these interpretations, and is more in accordance with the Saviour's words when He said, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world," as if He were now praying, "Keep them in that name."

This leads to the second critical remark. According to the most ancient manuscripts* and the best authorities, the relative pronoun *whom* is in the singular, and has *name* for its antecedent, not *disciples*,† understood: "*Keep them in Thy name, that name which Thou hast given me.*" Thus a rich and beautiful meaning appears, which cannot be gathered from our authorized version. Jesus is the revealer of God, and He alone had fully manifested the name of God. As before He had said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only

* Alexandrian, Vatican, and Sinaitic. † φ̄ not οὗς.

true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," so now he says, "Keep them in Thy name as given to me, as borne by me, as unfolded through me; keep them in the truth about Thee and me." Here again the Son associates Himself with the Father, and claims the Divine name as a name which had been given to Him for revelation amongst men. The point therefore of the Saviour's request is that His disciples might be kept in the name of God, not in a vague indefinite sense, but in that name as manifested, revealed, and personally embodied in Christ. "Ye believe in God," He had said to these disciples, "believe also in me." And now He prays that they might be kept in the name of the Father as revealed in the Son. This name alone was the high tower of their defence, their home and dwelling-place, their consolation and strength.

1. The Saviour prays for His disciples, that they might be kept in the knowledge of this name. It is in the name given to Christ, and maintained by Him as the Lord our righteousness, that Jehovah appears as a redeeming God and reconciling Father. It was of the utmost importance, therefore, that, as

the heralds of the gospel and the teachers of the Divine religion to the world, they should be kept in the knowledge of that name. Many temptations would meet and assail them, temptations from Jewish prejudice and Gentile philosophy, from various forms of worldly wisdom and human speculation. Christ Jesus had manifested to them the name of God ; He had given them lessons as to the glory, grace, wisdom, and working of the Father, revealed in Himself as the only begotten Son ; and they had profited by these lessons so as to believe and be sure that Jesus Christ was the Son of the living God, and that He alone had the words of eternal life. Now He prays on their behalf, that amidst all the attractions of human philosophy, all the ambitiousness of human wisdom, all the vain flights of carnal imagination, and the cold uncertainties of scepticism, they might be kept in the knowledge of the Divine name. They could only be kept right in their views of God, in the clearness, strength, and fulness of their knowledge of His name, as they were kept by Him. It is human to err ; and on no theme have men, when left to themselves, wandered more

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widely and disastrously than in their views of God. Hence it was blessed for the Apostles, on whom so much depended, to be kept in the true knowledge of His name.

2. The prayer of Jesus is that they might be kept in the experience of that name. The knowledge of it was a power which had done much in the disciples and for them. It was not a barren truth, but mighty, formative, and fertilizing. "To as many as believed in His name, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."* The WORD was God, and the life of the Word was the light of men. This name, as borne by Christ, and manifested by Him, had a power surpassing all besides over the hearts and histories of these disciples. It was this which charmed and subdued the impetuosity of Peter, which won the heart of the guileless Nathanael, which drew Matthew unhesitatingly from the receipt of custom, which arrested the tender sensibility and loving sympathy of John, which made Andrew joyfully leave his fishing nets and follow Him. They all beheld in Jesus the glory as of the only begotten of the

* John i. 12.

Father. What a precious experience then did this manifestation of the name of God in Christ give to them! As Jews, looking for redemption in Israel, they had a knowledge of God as the God of Israel before the advent and appearance of Jesus Christ; but the Divine name never then had such power over them as it had when they came to realize its glory in Him. They heard it, saw it, felt it, as they had never seen or felt it before. It arrested them, subdued them, melted them, purified them; it was in them a power for spiritual renewal and moral transformation. It was not the name of God in nature nor in providence, nor of God merely as the Almighty King of Israel, that thus influenced them, but of God as revealed in His Son; and the Saviour prays that they might be kept in the growing consciousness of the power of this name—of all that it could do for the human heart and mind in their enlightenment, sanctification, and comfort. These disciples, left in the world, would be exposed to manifold influences calculated to deteriorate their motives, damp their zeal, and deaden their affections; and only so long as they were kept in the

knowledge of God's name, and in the consciousness of its power, could they continue true to their mission and useful in the world. Hence the Saviour's prayer for them.

3. This prayer implies also that they might be kept in the consolation of that name. Jehovah is the "God of consolation," the "God of all comfort;" and there is no peace or joy like that which comes to the soul from the assurance that He is a Redeemer and Father. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe"—safe from the accusations of conscience and the thunder of law, the perils of life and the fears of death. Just as a child in darkness, trembling for fear, is cheered by the sound of his mother's voice or the certainty of his father's presence, even though unseen, so does the name of God, as revealed in Christ, sustain and encourage the souls of His people in the dreary and often trying pilgrimage to heaven. It is impossible for us fully to estimate the value of such comfort as this name would afford to the Apostles who were to labour and suffer for Christ in this world. They would be in perils oft; doubt

and darkness would frequently oppress them ; earth as well as hell would rage against them, striving to make prejudice and persecution hinder their work and hurt or destroy themselves ; but in the name of God, as Jesus had manifested it, they had a light in the midst of darkness, a joy for every sorrow, a power in weakness, and a solace for all their sadness. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And this faith in Christ as God's Son, and the revelation of God's heart, is still a stay under every trouble, and a gladness under every woe. Comfort could not fail them so long as they were kept in the full consciousness of the name of God ; for amidst all human vicissitudes that name continues ever the same, pregnant with holy power, and radiant with the brightness of infinite beauty and grace. No wrath of man, no rage of hell, can injure those to whom the name of God in Christ Jesus is a possession and a shield. Nor is this truth less applicable to us than it was to these Apostles. We can be kept right in thought, in heart, and in life, only just as we are kept in the name of God as it is embo-

died in the person of Christ, and manifested by Him.

But this keeping of the disciples in the Divine name, for which the Saviour prayed, was intended as a means to an end.

III. The object desired in this petition : “ *That they may be one, as we are.* ” These are wonderful words in their relation and applicability to weak and imperfect men. They point to the model and manifestation of true Christian union, especially among the Apostles in their position and mission. How much depended on their union, their oneness ! The wider bearing of the prayer for unity will come before us subsequently, so that we here only glance at it as it respects those for whom our Lord was praying. Assuredly amongst them union would be strength, safety, and success. Discord and disunion could not fail to bring disaster and failure at the very beginning of the Christian history. Vast then was the importance that the Apostles in a profound sense should be one.

The model of this union is suggested by the words, “ *as we are one.* ” Jesus does not ask that

He may be one with the Father, but asserts this oneness as a fact. In two senses this was true. (1) A oneness with the Father in essential unity of nature—a unity existing from eternity. But it is not to this oneness that our Lord alludes. He speaks and prays for His disciples as the “man Christ Jesus,” whose purposes and plans, desires and hopes, in the glorious design of His incarnation, were the same as the Father’s. (2) In His mind, will, and aim as Mediator here on earth He was one with the Father; and it is this oneness that Christ proposes as the model of oneness amongst His disciples. The words “even as” * express similarity, not identity.†

What then would be the manifestation of this oneness? Would it not be unity of mind, will, and affection in relation to their Master and His work, a unity resulting from participation in His life and devotion to His glory? Only suppose that these disciples were to go forth with differing

* καθώς,

† “The Son is *ὁμοούσιος*, of the same essence with the Father. Moses could not have said, in speaking of God and of himself, either to God or to the people, *we*.”—*Bengel’s Gnomon of the New Test. in loc.*

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views and discordant purposes in the commission given them as Apostles of the Lord. What confusion and defeat must be the result! Or, suppose that they were to go forth with opposite and clashing opinions about the claims of Christ Himself; one holding His supreme Godhead, another viewing Him as the highest of created beings only, and a third regarding Him merely as a man, and so on; the issue in such a case could only be spiritual disaster and failure. There might be, and there were, differences between them in many things, but touching the character and claims of the Christ of God there was oneness of apostolic perception, purpose, and pursuit. And this oneness of view and feeling binding them to the Saviour, and pervading all their work for Him, was to be maintained by their being kept in the Father's name as revealed in Jesus. God in Christ was to be the centre of their attraction, the bond of their union, the foundation of their hope, and the source of their power. Salvation to men they proclaimed through Him alone, and crowned Him Lord of all. This oneness the Lord Jesus desired to secure; and seeing that in a world

distracted by vain thoughts and wild speculations nothing could secure it but their being kept in the Father's name as manifested by Him, He prayed for this special blessing on their behalf—a prayer which was signally answered, as the apostolic history abundantly proves.

VIII.

THE DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP.

VIII.

THE DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP.

“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name : those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to Thee ; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”—JOHN xvii. 12, 13.

OUR Lord had prayed for His disciples whom He was about to leave in a sinful and hostile world, that they might be kept in the Father’s name as the bulwark of their safety and the source of their strength and joy. Now He adds some pleas for this petition, and urges some reasons connected with Himself for their preservation. It is as if He had said, “Holy Father, keep them in Thy name ; during my stay with them I kept them in Thy name ; but now I am coming to Thee, and can no more keep them as I have done by my bodily presence, my visible example, my audible

voice; therefore I commend them to Thee, that Thou mayest have them in Thy holy keeping. My interest in them will ever abide; and I pray thus to Thee for them in their hearing, that their consciousness and remembrance of it may be the means of fulfilling in them my joy, so that they shall truly and abidingly rejoice." Such seems to be the connexion and import of the Saviour's language here. You perceive He affirms that He had done what He now prays the Father to do, that He had kept the disciples in time past, as He prays the Father to keep them in time to come. In this He certainly uses language which no mere man could truly or righteously without blasphemy use. Whatsoever things the Father doeth, "these also doeth the Son likewise."*

I. We have here first a declaration of the Saviour's gracious care for His disciples: "*While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name.*" He speaks as if His being with them was just about to close, and therefore He prays that the Father might take up the work which He had been doing in relation to them. For about three years Jesus

* John v. 19.

Christ had now been with them; and what years had these been to them! years of wonderful discovery, gracious blessing, and brightening hope. While He was with them, He had done all that was needful to keep them in the name of God. The second word translated *kept* is not the same in the original language as the first,* and expresses more fully the idea of guardianship and care, the result of which was successful preservation and keeping.† Thus we have suggested to us the fact that the disciples were in danger even while their Master continued with them. Not only were they in peril from their own weakness and Jewish prejudices, but especially from the unhallowed and unhappy influence of spiritual pride. What were they, that they should have been selected for such a position and service in connexion with the Messiah's kingdom? Nothing would have been more hurtful to themselves, or injurious to their influence as messengers of Christ, than the indulgence of spiritual vainglory. But the Saviour kept them in the

* ἐτήρουν, ἐφύλαξα.

† "Through the φυλάσσειν is the τηρεῖν accomplished."—*Meyer's Comment.* (Clark.)

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name of God as manifested by Himself, and this was at once the shield of their safety, the source of their strength, and the bond of their obligation. He kept them by His teaching. He was ever instructing them and unfolding to them the excellency and glory of the Father's name, and He taught them as they were able to bear. That which he spake in parables to the multitude, He often explained in private to them ; and the whole bearing of His instructions was that they might discern the perfection of the Father's character, and apprehend the saving power of His love. Jesus kept His disciples also by His example. They saw Him ever true to the name and character of God. To manifest that name was the purpose of His holy life. They often beheld Him wearied and faint, yet ever finding His meat and drink in doing His Father's will, and in occupation with His Father's business. In devotedness to His godlike mission He had meat to eat which they knew not of. The name, governance, and glory of the Father were to Him as the pole star of His personal and public life, guiding His entire course among men ; and His example could not

fail to influence His disciples for good. Nor are we to forget that His influence over them directly and indirectly must have been very great. The influence of a parent over a child, of a teacher over a pupil, of a friend over his fellow, is often powerful. How great and sacred must the influence of Jesus have been over His disciples! They were constantly with Him; their hearts and hopes were bound up with Him; He was the mighty moral magnet of their character and course; they looked to Him as the Christ of God, who had come to restore Jerusalem to all her pristine glory, and there was ceaselessly going forth from Him an influence which diffused itself through their hearts, and tended to mould their lives. He graciously kept them. Their dulness, waywardness, and forgetfulness were often provoking; but He was ever patient and gentle with them. Grace triumphed in all His intercourse with them. He tenderly kept them, with a heart ever overflowing with kindness and love. He drew them to Himself as His dearest earthly friends, assured them of His affection, and instructed them as children according to their capacity. His keeping of them, moreover,

involved some anxiety. In the relation which they sustained to Him, and in the work which was before them as the heralds of His truth and the champions of His cause, His thoughts were much with them. Earnestly did He care for them, that they might be faithful to their position, and fitted for His service. It was to Him as a painful surprise when, in the garden of Gethsemane with Him, immediately after the utterance of this prayer, some of them could not keep awake with Him during the hour of His agony. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Yet, He says here, "I have guarded them, I have kept them," so faithful had He been, and so efficient His trust.

But was there not a painful, an awful exception to the success of His guardianship? "*Those whom Thou gavest me I have kept; and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*" Some read these words in this way: "Those whom Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of THEM is lost," making the language mean that Judas, to whom it refers, was not given to Christ as the others were (verses 2, 6, 9), and therefore that he was not kept. Now there may be a

deep sense in which this is true ; but it is a sense beyond our human reach. We must regard the giving here, I think, as applicable to all the Apostles alike, to Judas as well as to the others. They were all given to Jesus as disciples, and He taught and guarded them all ; but Judas did not respond to His teaching and His care. He allowed vain thoughts, avaricious desires, and worldly ambition to take possession of his soul, in opposition to the love and influence of his Lord, so that he became the son of perdition, and was lost. But Jesus did not lose him ; he lost or rather destroyed himself, and in his perdition the Scripture was fulfilled. The Scripture referred to is probably that which was subsequently quoted by St. Peter, when an apostle was chosen in the place of Judas. "For it is written in the book of Psalms (lxi. 25, and cix. 8), Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein ; and his bishopric let another take" (Acts i. 20). "The son of perdition" is a Hebrew expression, meaning that he was the prey or property of perdition, but involving "as its fundamental principle the necessary attribution of personal guilt, the note of what is a man's own, and

out of which springs his character and his fate.”* The quotation of Scripture as referring to Judas cannot imply that he perished for the sake of fulfilling the word of God, but to show that all things are foreknown to the omniscient God, and that the overthrow of the impenitent and wicked is arranged by the Divine counsel. It was not fated that Judas should become a son of perdition; but that as a son of perdition, working out his own character and destiny, it was determined that he must be cut off from the college of the Apostles, and go “to his own place,” according to the righteous judgment of God. This Divine judgment could have no influence on the mind or heart of Judas, any more than the fact that Jesus Christ was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” could influence the Jews in inspiring their blood-thirsty malignity to take away His life. Judas did not, would not let the Saviour keep him. What He did to guard the other disciples He did for him, but he cherished sin in his heart rather than the love of his Lord, so that the devil gained the mastery over him, and he became the author of his own perdition. Awful

* Stier's Words of the Lord Jesus, vol vi., p. 481.

power of the human heart ! Tremendous possibility ! that a man may resist the Holy Ghost, and so harbour evil in his soul, that he becomes an obedient child of the devil, ready to do his bidding for his own ruin. "Judas was not an involuntary instrument of a Divine decree."* Jesus did everything for his preservation, but he would not ; he rejected mercy, resisted holy influence, and hardened himself against Divine love to his destruction. The clause which refers to Judas may properly be regarded as parenthetical, and the first part of the verse may be connected with the following, "*Now come I to Thee.*" The Saviour's gracious care was manifested in keeping or guarding His disciples from all the dangers to which they were exposed. And does He not with equal zeal and care preserve His followers now ? Are not His instruction, example, and influence available for us ? True, we do not audibly hear His voice, we do not visibly see His face, but we have His prevailing intercession ; and His advocacy, with the promised presence of the Comforter, is mightier and better for our

* Comment. on St. John's Gospel, by Dr. Tholuck, p. 369.
(Clark's For. Theol. Lib.)

preservation in this sinful world, than if we could actually gaze upon His form and sit at His feet.

We have here further—

II. A proof of the Saviour's loving thoughtfulness for His disciples. "*Now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*" It was not merely His wish that they might have joy—His joy fulfilled in them; but He prayed for them, and commended them to the care and keeping of His Father, in their hearing, that they might have the fullest evidence of His personal and loving interest in them, and so the very consciousness of this might minister to their fulness of joy.

The object which He sought was that "His joy might be fulfilled in themselves." These words do not mean, that His joy in them, as His disciples, might be fulfilled; but that they might know and realize in their own souls, and in their human mission, something of His own personal and perfect joy. "My joy." We know that even in the depths of His humiliation He "rejoiced in spirit," and that for the joy which was set before Him He endured the cross, and despised its shame. How

great and blessed and pure must have been His joy, as the incarnate Son of God ! It was the joy of the complete consciousness in Him of God, and which was to be imparted to them by the Holy Ghost as fully as their imperfect natures could receive it. It was the joy of the consciousness of perfect duty. He had neglected nothing of the will of God, and had finished the work which had been given Him to do. There was no flaw in His enterprise, no hesitation in His obedience, no imperfection in His motives. It was the joy of the assurance of victory. He had come into the world to defeat Satan and destroy the works of the devil. The prince of the world could find nothing in Him, and was to be cast out. The issue was not doubtful, the triumph was certain, and the prospect was to Jesus one unbounded gladness. In all this there was the joy of the consciousness of pure benevolence. In love there is always a tender joy. Divine love was the prompting cause in the advent of Christ : in the redemption of mankind, and the removal of human woe, His love was to have its fitting exercise and its crowning triumph. This joy, then, which the Saviour possessed, He

wished His disciples to realize in themselves, that it might be their strength and protection. Nothing besides could be such a gladness to them. The world gives sorrow, anxiety, disappointment, bitterness, and trouble ; but to share in Christ's own joy must ever be sunshine in the soul : for the human heart it is a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Wondrous truth ! blessed assurance ! that frail and imperfect men may possess in their hearts, and realize in their daily life, the fulness of the Saviour's joy—a truth not only for the Apostles, but for all who own Christ Jesus as their Lord, and follow Him. St. John tells us, in his first General Epistle, that he wrote the things which he did—all that he had seen and heard, looked upon and handled, of the word of life—in order that the joy of the first Christians to whom he wrote might be full.* Participation in this joy, then, comes down to us, and we may rejoice in the Lord, not only as a privilege, but as a duty ; for the Saviour will have all His disciples to be filled with His own deep, sacred, and undying joy in the consciousness of God, of duty, of victory, and of unbounded love.

* 1 John i. 1—4.

But we must notice somewhat more particularly the means here adopted by our Lord to produce or give the impression of this joy in the souls of the disciples: "*These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*" Jesus might have presented His petitions for them silently and unheard by them; but He spoke them audibly, that they might partake of His joy. But we may ask, How was this audible prayer calculated to minister to their joy? It is not difficult to find the answer to this question, if we look within, and consider the nature and need of our own hearts. We feel how important it is in ordinary daily life to have sentiment expressed and feeling made known. Sometimes you may have gone in doubt, in heaviness of spirit and sadness of heart, when a word spoken in love, an utterance of assured friendship, would have relieved your gloom, lifted your load, and cheered your path. You may have a deep interest in the progress and welfare of others; their persons may be dear to you, and their success the object of your earnest desire; and yet at the very time they may be in doubt of your affection and sympathy, because you have never

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spoken the loving word, or expressed your feeling in a way to reach their hearts. The Saviour was more lovingly thoughtful for His disciples. It would have made no real difference to their safety if His prayer had been unheard by them; but it would have made a great difference to the buoyancy and cheerfulness of their hearts, a great difference to the measure and brightness of their joy. The consciousness would ever be theirs, that they had heard Him pray for them and commend them to the Father's care. Christian thoughtfulness therefore should ever prompt us to let those whom we love hear or know of our interest in them and our affection for them. The Saviour's audible prayer for His disciples would minister to their joy by strengthening their faith. Although He was about to leave them, they would see that He cared for them as much as ever, and that some of His last thoughts while on earth concerned them and their safety. To hear Him thus praying for them, commending them to the Divine care and protection, and speaking of them as His own, given Him by God, and as those whom He taught and guarded while He continued with them, could

not fail to strengthen their confidence; and an increase of faith would undoubtedly be for an increase of joy. The audible prayer would also minister to their joy by promoting and fostering their love. They could not but love a Master who in such manifold ways proved His deep affection for them. Love produces love. Here Jesus not only intercedes for them, and seeks the Divine protection on their behalf, but desires that His joy might be realized in them, that they might have fellowship in thought and feeling, in emotions of peace and gladness, with Himself. This could not fail to fan the flame of affection in their hearts to Him. Pure love in any case is joy—love in *such* a case, to *such* a Friend, must have been the source of heavenly joy, the element of “joy unspeakable.” Again, this audible praying would minister to their joy by inspiring their hope. These disciples did not know what their future course would be. He had, indeed, told them that in the world they were to expect tribulation, and encounter opposition; but when they heard their gracious Master thus praying to God for them, they knew that whatsoever might await them of trial, or difficulty,

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or duty, they would be safe. Thus hope would be inspired by the remembrance of all His words to God for them and about them, and hope in every scene of their course would promote their joy. The recollection of this prayer would often fill their souls with a holy and triumphant gladness in all their course on earth as heralds of the Cross and champions of the cause of that glorious Lord who,

“ Though now ascended up on high,
Still bends on earth a brother's eye.”

IX.

*THE SAINTS' PRESERVATION IN THE
WORLD.*

IX.

THE SAINTS' PRESERVATION IN THE WORLD.

"I have given them Thy word ; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."—JOHN xvii. 14, 15.

OUR Lord here describes the way in which He had kept His disciples, and gives the result of it in a statement of their spiritual character, and of the hatred cherished by the world towards them. He had imparted to them the word of the Father, and it had produced in them a spiritual elevation and a moral separation from the world, and drawn them to an experience in this respect like His own, so that reproach and opposition from the world were to be expected as their lot. These points were ad-

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duced by Christ as reasons for the preservation which He supplicates on their behalf. Taught as they had been, and separated from the world, so as to be exposed to its scorn and hatred, it was necessary and most desirable that they should be kept from the evil which abounded in it. Jesus had already prayed that they might be kept in the Father's name; now He prays that they might be kept from the sin around them—the two grand requirements of the Christian life, establishment in God and separation from the evil of the world. The one is the complement of the other. To be preserved in God and preserved from the world is the height of Christian attainment here, whence we can have the clearest prospect of the heavenly land of light and love that lies beyond.

I. The first thing for consideration in these verses is the position of the disciples in the world, as here stated: "*I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" Their position was one distinguished by spiritual privilege: "*I have given them Thy word*"—

terms comprehensive of the revelation of Divine grace and truth as a whole, which Christ Jesus taught to His disciples, as they were able to bear it. Who at this time, in the whole world, knew the word of God as did these Galilean fishermen and a few others who believed in the Messiah? How few besides! Peter and his fellow-Apostles could say to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." * The highest revelation of God had been given to these disciples. Was not this impartation a real boon, a very gracious privilege, and a most illustrious honour? To receive the word of God, to receive it as a personal possession, to receive it as a sacred deposit in trust for the whole world, and to receive it from Him who was the Revealer of God and the Redeemer of men, was in truth the highest possible privilege. And since with every privilege responsibility is involved, these disciples, as the depositaries of God's truth and the heralds of His message of mercy to the world, were invested with

* John vi. 68, 69.

a responsibility which required them to be kept with Divine power. All disciples now, in a sense, share in this privilege, and therefore may consider themselves included in the circle for whom this prayer is offered.

The words of the Saviour, further, mark the position of His disciples as one of moral separation: "*They are not of the world, as I am not of the world.*" They had a character different in its principles, desires, hopes, and aims, from that of the world generally. They were in it, yet not of it. They had been given out of it to Christ to receive the word of God, and with it the elements of a new nature, so that they were no longer of the world. It was the teaching and influence of Jesus Christ which had been the means of working this great change in them, so that He could say of them, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." *

But what was the nature of the separation from the world which thus marked them? They were not of the world, as we have just said, in their character, for the world is ever presented as having

* John xv. 3.

a character opposed to God. Self, not God, is its foundation; it seeks the present rather than the future, walks by sight rather than by faith, glories in the human rather than in the Divine, holds by the carnal and material rather than the spiritual. In this respect the disciples were no longer of the world. They had surrendered self at the bidding of the Son of God, and 'had forsaken all to follow Him; so that new life was given them, distinguished by new devotion, new service, and new joys. To them the glory of Christ was infinitely more than all worldly good, and association with Him, in His kingdom, was the object of their highest ambition. While to the world the Messiah Himself was "as a root out of a dry ground," possessing neither "form nor comeliness," to them He was "the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely," all their salvation and all their desire. How widely different, then, from the character of the world! So of necessity were they different in their condition. The world, as such, was lying in wickedness and under condemnation. The children of disobedience are declared to be the children of wrath, and the friendship of the

world is enmity with God. Jesus, referring to Himself as the Son of God, had said, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned ;"* and as these disciples believed, they had passed from condemnation, and had their salvation and eternal glory bound up with Christ. Thus they were morally separated both in character and condition from the world in which they were placed to live and act as lights.

But this separation exposed them to social persecution : "*The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world.*" It hated their Master without a cause, and it would not fail to hate them. The only world of which they knew anything by experience as yet was their own country, and it hated them. They had been drawn to Jesus by the fulness of grace and truth which dwelt in Him, so that He became increasingly to them the centre of attraction and the object of love ; while those who rejected Him naturally hated them. And if this was their experience up to the time of their Master's prayer for them on this occasion, how signally in a wider sphere did it come to be so

* John iii. 18.

afterwards ! They had to endure the hostility, the reproach, and the persecution of both the Jewish and the Gentile worlds. In the expressive language of St. Paul, they were "made as the filth of the earth, the offscouring of all things." * The Saviour's spotless purity rebuked the looseness of the age in which He appeared and lived amongst men ; His benevolence rebuked its selfishness ; His piety, which fed on the airs of heaven, rebuked its worldliness, which grovelled exclusively amongst the carnal and the earthly ; therefore it hated Him, and the disciples shared in the reproach and hostility which were heaped upon the Master. Thus exposed and treated in the world, they needed the Divine protection.

There is much food for thought in the idea that He was the model of their separation from the world : "*Even as I am not of the world.*" Jesus had not come out of the world, as His disciples had done ; for He was never of it, as they were. He had come into it, and drawing them to Himself, had drawn them out of it, that they might be partakers of His own life, to be conformed to His

* 1 Cor. iv. 13.

image, and identified with Himself in the conquest of evil. It is a common expression, often spoken in praise of a man's character, that he is "a man of the world." Frequently do we hear the boast, "I am a man of the world," as the honourable encomium of a life devoted to the pursuits and pleasures of this earthly scene; but the highest eulogy which Christ Jesus could pronounce on His disciples was that they were, as He was, "not of the world." It is true that to the phrase, "a man of the world," a modified meaning has to be attached, as used by men in their relation to each other, for it is never used with any thought of contrast with the world to come; but the very fact that the terms are generally held as eulogistic of character shows how far Christ and the world are in opposition or at variance. He was not of the world; although He came to the world, lived in the world, mixed with the men of the world, and in the scenes of the world, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and His disciples accepted His principles, and gradually became assimilated to His character. To be like Christ, and to be "unspotted from the world," is

the only true and abiding glory of human character. What does the world care for saints? It has not a good opinion of them, nor a good word for them; its spirit is entirely opposed to them, and it is not slow to call them fools.

In view, then, of the position of His disciples, of their character and danger, Christ Jesus prays that they might be kept and shielded by God from the evil around them. For the same reasons He intercedes for His disciples now. They have had revealed to them by the Spirit the truth and glory of God, in the person and work of His incarnate Son, that they may be as lights in the world; and to fulfil their function they must be kept by Divine power, and nourished by Divine grace. The Saviour knows our perils and temptations and weaknesses infinitely better than we do ourselves, and He prays that we may be kept from the evil that is in the world. Let us, then, consider—

II. The preservation of the disciples in the world, as supplicated by Christ Jesus: "*I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*" This is the second instance in this prayer of an utterance of

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negation—"I *pray not*"—in which Christ tells us what He does not pray for. There is deep meaning in this negation. It is to be remembered that the words were uttered in the hearing of the disciples; and we may be well assured that our Lord had a special purpose in thus making known to them what He does not pray for. Although He saw the difficulties they would have to encounter, the opposition they would have to meet, and the persecution they would have to endure, and although He loved them with an affection which He only could cherish, yet He does not desire their removal from the region of danger and the scenes of trial. Christ did not seek this for His chosen disciples; but now they sometimes seek it for themselves. When through trouble their hearts are overwhelmed, and anguish oppresses them, and their trials seem greater than they can bear, their feelings find embodiment in the language of Job: "Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for, even that it would please God to destroy me!"* Or, in the words of David, they say, "Oh that I had wings

* Job vi. 8, 9.

like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."* But the language may neither be pious nor wise on their part. The Saviour, then, did not pray that His disciples might be taken out of the world. Although He saw fully and understood thoroughly all that they would have to do and to endure in it, He did not wish them to be removed from the world as the surest way of being delivered from its evil. There were reasons for leaving them in the world, which were of great importance—reasons with respect to God, themselves, and the world, which we do well to endeavour to comprehend.

The reason in respect to God is clear. It was for His glory that they were to be left in the world: they were to "show forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."† Their position, character, and mission were to magnify His grace, and glorify His name. Thus St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, says, "That we, who first trusted in Christ, should be to the praise of His glory."‡ In perfect wisdom God placed the treasure of

* Ps. lv. 6.

† 1 Pet. ii. 9.

‡ Eph. i. 12.

His gospel in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be His own. In an important sense it is true of every Christian that he is here as a depositary of blessing and a light in the world, for the glory of the Almighty Creator. His life is not for himself, but for God. It is not less manifest that there is a reason in respect to themselves for the disciples being left in the world. Although they had been taught, and trained by the Saviour Himself, and had received a new life from Him, they were very far from being perfect. Through work and suffering, through toil and tears, they had still much to learn, and far higher attainments to make. Although they had a title to mansions in the Father's house above, and their Master had virtually told them so, yet they had not reached all the fitness for these mansions which was necessary. Peter's impetuosity had to be checked and softened; the faith of Thomas had to be confirmed; the angularities, weaknesses, and imperfections in the character of all had to be worn down and removed, so that they might savour more of heaven and less of earth. By action

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and suffering in the present life they would certainly become more meet for this inheritance of the saints in light. This is the condition of all Christian disciples now, and should be their experience here. The thief who died penitent on the cross entered glory by the grace of the Saviour; but what a different capacity for that glory must the Apostle of the Gentiles have had when he was called to pass from the fight which he had fought, and the course which he had finished, to the crown of righteousness and life! The ground of glory in either case was the same, but the discipline and duty of time gave capacity for heavenly felicity in the one, which there was no opportunity for in the other. Happy is it for us, if, day by day, as life is lengthened in this world, we are seeking to grow in meetness for the heavenly rest. In wisdom and mercy to the disciples themselves did the Saviour pray that they might not be taken out of the world, but kept from its evil.

Further, there was a reason for this prayer with respect to the world. These very disciples had been spoken of by Christ "as the lights of

the world" and "the salt of the earth;" and if they were withdrawn from the world, what was to become of it for necessary teaching and moral influence? By them Divine truth was to be promulgated among men, and God's saving health made known throughout the nations. It was His pleasure that human instrumentality should be the agency in this grand mission. Great, then, was the importance attached to the continuance of the disciples in the world. To the voice and effort and zeal of men Christ committed the advancement of His kingdom on the earth. The very discipline of the Church, carried on in this life, is for the diffusion of holy influences amongst men. Hence every hour of the Christian's history and experience has its duty and its responsibility in relation to the enlightenment and salvation of the world at large. Many Christians little remember this reason for their continuance in this world. We are prone to please ourselves and forget our Maker, to live to ourselves instead of living to Him, to hold out our hand to receive or grasp the world's goods, instead of holding it out with the words of life in it, for the world's

instruction and conversion. Christ, the Lord of life, continues His disciples for a time on the earth, for its advantage and His own glory. His method is utterly opposed to that ecclesiastical system which would shut up saints in cells and cloisters, lest they should come into contact with the world. It is His will that His disciples should be in the world, diffusing abroad the elements of life and light, not kept apart by themselves in monasteries or convents, to be protected from real or imaginary harm, and preserved pure for God. Every Christian owes a duty to society, that the life which is in him may grapple with the death around him, and that the light which he has may help to dispel the prevalent darkness. For this reason the Saviour says, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world." He seeks that in their varied pursuits at home and abroad, in the counting-house, the ware-room, the factory, or the farm, they may diffuse His truth, and leaven society with the principles of His gospel. To this end He prays that they may be kept from the evil on every side of them.

This positive petition demands our considera-

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tion : “*I pray that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*” Some think our Lord refers here to the evil one ; * but it is better to regard the term as referring generally to moral evil. Our Lord had already told His disciples that in the world they were to have tribulation, so that He does not pray here for their exemption from physical ills. His desire was that they might be kept from sin in all its forms—from yielding wrongfully either to the frowns or to the smiles of the world. He knew their weaknesses, the temptations to which they would be exposed, the special and specious forms of evil which they would have to meet, and the snares among which they would have to move ; therefore He prays the Father to keep them from sin. Although not of the world, they were in peril from it, liable to be defiled, robbed both of purity and peace, and it is impossible for us to overestimate the value of such a prayer presented by their Master for them. Evil has many forms, many influences, and many avenues by which it approaches to assail the citadel of manhood. It may come as error, to bewilder the judgment, to wither the intellectual buddings of the highest life,

* ὁ πονηρός.

or to lead the soul astray from the safe and simple paths of truth. Terribly momentous would have been the evil to these disciples, if error had seduced them to another gospel, and "yet not another," and sapped the foundations of their faith, so as to make them abandon or modify the Divine word committed to them. Christ Jesus prayed that they might be kept from this evil. It might come also as sordid passion, to blight the heart and deaden the affections, so that the love of ease or self-indulgence, or worldly honour or friendship, should invade their souls, and usurp the throne of manhood. From this evil, too, the Saviour supplicated that they might be kept. It might come, too, as moral debasement, so that virtuous principle might fall before some fleshly lust, and the life should become stained by outward sin. In how many ways could sin have insinuated itself into their souls! Their varied natural temperaments might be the avenue of its approach, and the devil gain a victory over them through their native weaknesses. In one case it might be sudden fear; in another, intemperate fiery zeal; and in a third, unholy ambition; but Christ prayed for their pre-

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servation in all ways, that Divine strength might be made perfect in their weakness, and their own helplessness fortified by heavenly grace. They could not keep themselves; their protection and safety were left with God. His perfections were to be their bulwark, His arm was to be their defence, and His joy their strength. The word rendered *keep* is strong and expressive, and conveys the idea of watchfulness, guardianship, and care. The eye that never slumbers was to watch over them, and the arm never shortened was to shield them; the wisdom which was never baffled, the power that was never overcome, and the grace which was never exhausted, were to be exercised on their behalf, to preserve them from evil. How fully this prayer was answered, their future history shows.

The grand purport of the Saviour's intercession now is that His followers may be kept from the evil which is in the world. He sees them mingling in its scenes, transacting its business, assailed by its temptation, oppressed by its cares, and He prays the Father to keep them. With Christ thus interceding for us, and God on our side, victory shall be ours, and everlasting glory won.

X.

*THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE
DISCIPLES.*

X.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE DISCIPLES.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.”—JOHN xvii. 16, 17.

IT was most important that the disciples of the Lord Jesus should be kept both in the name of God and from the evil of the world. They were to be the teachers of the Church and the lights of the world, and their mission required that they should ever walk in the light, and be preserved from sin. More even than this was necessary, for there was still something of the world in them, which had to be subdued or extirpated. They were not fully delivered from the dominion of evil in their hearts, and therefore in themselves, as well as for the sake of their work in the world, they needed to be sanctified. Accord-

ingly the Lord prayed for this great blessing,
"Sanctify them through Thy truth."

If this sanctification was necessary for the first disciples and apostles of the Lord, it is no less necessary for His followers now. The same vital distinction still exists between the friendship of the world and the friendship of God, between the Church of God and the society of the world.* Yet many who bear the Christian name, instead of seeking to be kept from the evil of the world, run rashly and thoughtlessly into it. They cherish its friendships, pursue its pleasures, devote themselves chiefly or exclusively to its business, and strive to accumulate its property, with only a brief religious service on Sunday, observed as a sort of frame or setting to a thoroughly worldly picture. And in myriads of cases, alas! not even that as a counteraction to worldliness. The best preservative from outward evil is the high sanctification for which the Saviour prays in behalf of all His disciples.

Christ repeats the statement already made by Him regarding their separation from the world:

* James iv. 4; 1 John ii. 15.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We cannot suppose this to be a "vain repetition," or that the Lord had no purpose or meaning in thus renewing this truth touching His disciples. It is again used as a plea or argument for His new petition on their behalf. His previous supplications for them may be regarded as simply defensive, and for their preservation ; now He advances to another thought, a thought of a positive and aggressive character, and He renews His plea. It gives intensity to the view of their separation from the world. They had been won to Christ, and gradually rooted and grounded in love to Him, so that they became not of the world, but, in sentiment, aim, and hope, opposed to it. The world itself, of course, does not see that this can be any eulogium to a man or set of men, that it is any subject of commendation, or any position of advantage ; for to be men of the world is the highest boast of multitudes who even put in some claim to be religious. The disciples of Jesus required their character to be purified and strengthened still more and more ; so that He prays for them, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth."

Further, the repetition of these words, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world," gives intensity to the view of their situation in the world. As separated from it, they could expect no help from it. Their very presence in it would be as a protest and a rebuke, so that they might look for nothing but scorn and persecution from it. It could not strengthen their Christian principles, nor show sympathy with their holy mission, nor brighten their heavenly hopes, nor encourage them in their arduous labours. And that the world might get no advantage over them, it was most important that whatever of worldliness or carnality remained in their hearts should be taken away, that they should be thoroughly sanctified through the truth. This is the character which will live and be glorified when all the honours of the world shall have for ever faded and passed away.

I. What, then, was the force of this prayer : "*Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth*" ? It is of great moment to ascertain the rich import of this request. The blessing sought is sanctification, which in its simplest meaning is the setting apart of a person or a thing from a

common to a holy use, from an ordinary or secular service to the service of God. In relation to men, sanctification is the weaning from self, sense, and sin, and the devotion of head, heart, and hands, the faculties of the mind and the members of the body, to the service and glory of God. Here the Saviour is praying for His own disciples as a special class, that they might be thoroughly devoted in heart and life to the love and obedience of the Most High, in the ministry of His truth. The blessing asked for involved both moral transformation and official qualification, the one as the basis of the other; the complete consecration of the whole man to moral conformity to God, and to holy labour for Him. As regarded their spiritual and moral condition, the disciples had much to learn, which they did not yet know, and much to realize, which they had not yet felt. They were not already perfect, and they had not yet attained. There were elements of evil in their nature to be rooted up, principles of pride to be overthrown, prejudices to be subdued, and selfishness to be destroyed, so that the very highest blessing for them was to be divinely transformed, sanctified,

and renewed. It was a personal matter of great practical moment, having to do with their hearts and lives before God. The religious economy in which they had been trained as Jews dealt with sanctification in an outward sense, as pertaining to vestments, ablutions, and symbols ; but Christ Jesus turned their thoughts from such symbolic consecration to the sanctification of their own hearts, the state of their own thoughts, desires, and affections. It was not enough that they should be right in theory and sound in doctrine : sanctification pertained to the whole of their inward as well as outward life, comprehended the elevation and purity of every power, part, and energy of their being. It was a complete and thorough, not a partial or one-sided renewal. The thoughts of the mind, the words of the tongue, and the actions of the life, must all take shape and form from the sanctifying grace of God. We are assured that it is His will, "even our sanctification."† This work was already begun in them—the expressions used by our Lord regarding them inform us of this fact—but they were not completely sanctified. It

* 1 Thess. v. 23.

was a gradual process which they had to realize in living spiritual connexion with Christ Jesus, and dependence on Him by means of the truth. For this He prays on their behalf, as it would be the fulfilment in them of the grand moral purpose for which He came into our world, "was wounded for our transgressions," and "bruised for our iniquities."*

Doubtless, too, an element of official consecration was involved in the sanctification for which the Saviour prayed, and such qualifications for their apostleship as God alone could give them. They were to be chosen vessels, meet for the Master's use, "to bear His name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." Solemnly does their gracious Lord ask that they might be devoted in heart and life, and qualified by every gift and grace, as His faithful and efficient servants. The official consecration, as has been already said, rests upon the moral and spiritual sanctification, and this sanctification is secured through the truth of God. Mere ecclesiastical ordination is valueless, where it is not based

* Isa. liii. 5.

on personal holiness, and where it is not preceded and accompanied by a spiritual consecration to the service of Christ in the gospel.

II. The means of this blessing are distinctly specified: "*Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.*" The preposition in the original is *in*, and points to the truth or word of God as the instrument of sanctification. This may be regarded as comprehending the whole of Divine revelation, especially its main theme in the infinite love of God, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, His only begotten Son. We are not, however, to understand that God's dealings with His children in providence have not a sanctifying influence or tendency. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."* So David could say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" and in every age since his time the same sentiment has found truthful utterance from the lips and histories of God's children. Yet it is only as the strokes of affliction make the truth more impressive, and cause it to sink deeper into the soul,

* Heb. xii. 6.

that they exercise a sanctifying power. Mere pain, sorrow, and trouble of themselves have no natural tendency to elevate or purify; they put men into a position suitable for thought and reflection, so that the living word of God is brought more fully to bear on the soul for its spiritual enlightenment and renewal. But it is the truth which is the means of sanctification, and it is not difficult to see its adaptation to this end.

The truth of God sanctifies by the discoveries which it makes. Light is ever pure and purifying; and the truth of God in the gospel of His Son is the light of heaven on the path and upon the soul of man. Where there is ignorance of God and Divine things, there can be no true purity of heart. Admirably fitted, then, is God's word as the instrument of sanctification. It solves the most momentous problems connected with our being, and satisfies the most anxious cravings of the soul with respect to all that it really needs to know. It reveals to us God Himself in all the majesty of His glory, in all the breadth and length, the height and depth of His love, righteousness, and grace. We have

“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* He was “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person,” and we are privileged to see in Him both “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” This gospel further reveals to us ourselves, our fallen and ruined condition, destroyed by sin, and with no hope but in the “grace of God which bringeth salvation.” It brings also life and immortality to light, lifts the veil from the future, and gives us glimpses of our Father’s house above, with its many mansions, where His children

“Shall see His face,
And never, never sin.”

It tells us of a reconciling Father, of a glorious Redeemer, of a Divine and all-sufficient Comforter, as well as of a house of perfect love and purity, after we have ended the pilgrimage and conflicts of time. Can the sinful soul of man be brought into contact with these grand revelations without realizing their quickening and sanctifying power? Converse with the truths

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

which they involve must tend to weaken the power of sin, and withdraw the heart from the dominion of the world. They are not made known to us merely for the sake of captivating the imagination or gratifying the curiosity, but of transforming and purifying the soul. Their light is the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness for clearing the murky atmosphere and exhaling the moral pollution which envelop the heart. Thus the word of God grapples with sin in every power and part of our nature.

Moreover the truth sanctifies by the motives which it conveys. How mighty its power is in this respect few Christian disciples have proved, as they might and ought to have done. There is not a motive which can touch the human heart, whether of love, gratitude, or holy desire, that is not conveyed in the truth of God, and brought to bear on men through the doctrine of the cross. Its motives are the mightiest which the human soul can feel. They appeal to all its faculties, they touch all its chords, they deal with all its needs. The word of God takes us to the yawning pit of perdition, and points to

the doom and misery deserved through sin, then takes us to Calvary, and points us to Christ Jesus dying as a ransom to redeem us from sin and woe. Under the cross, with all its agony and shame in view, the believer comes to know the deep meaning of the truth that "Christ is made of God unto us sanctification," and that "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Thence from Calvary it takes us, so to speak, to the top of Pisgah, that we may obtain some glimpses of the promised land of glory, and gives us the assurance that in the heavenly inheritance there is room for all His children, a place for each of the followers of His Son. Thus all motive combines in the truth of God to make us hate sin, rise above the world, and perfect holiness in His fear. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."* Nothing

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

can gain the soul to purity, which rejects the power of the cross, or denies the truth of God as it is in Christ.

But the word of God exercises authority as well as employs motives; it commends as well as teaches, and sanctifies by the principles which it enforces and the duties which it enjoins. To the Christian all duty may be summed up in the one grand duty of imitating Christ and walking in Him. He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps. In order to this, what self-denial must there be, what crucifixion of the flesh must there be, what resistance of the devil, what nonconformity to the world, what inward conflict and godly jealousy, in order that sin may be subdued, and holiness become transparent and triumphant in the character. The gospel comes to us with the tender gentleness and majestic persuasiveness of infinite love, and says, "Be ye followers of God as dear children." Its sanctifying influence is exercised by the spirit of its precepts, as well as by the power of its motives.

The prospects which this truth unfolds also

tend to the sanctification of the soul. On this ground St. John says, "He that hath this hope in him (the hope which the gospel gives of being with Christ for ever) purifieth himself, even as He is pure."* It cannot be otherwise. The word reveals not only a heaven of ineffable splendour, but a heaven of spotless purity, into which there cannot enter anything which defileth.

"Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame."

The universe is ransacked for images of attraction and beauty to pourtray the grandeur and glory of heaven; for there will be sights to be seen, sounds to be heard, wonders to be realized, and emotions to be felt, which heart of man has not conceived; but all will be for the everlasting rest of the saints and the home of the holy for ever. As already observed, the very prospect before the Christian tends to holiness, and the more clearly he can read his title to mansions in the skies, the more will it be in him the means of sanctification. To dwell with Christ, to behold His glory and be like Him, to join the Church

* 1 John iii. ~

of the firstborn and the innumerable company of angels, is a prospect which cannot be contemplated without drawing the soul upward, and preparing it for the realization of that glory which even now is so blessed and beautiful in hope.

In these various ways the word or truth of God exercises a sanctifying power in contact with the soul ; and in other ways, which we do not fully see or apprehend, Christ is pre-eminently "the truth which is after godliness." *

Those who most devoutly receive "the engrafted word which is able to save the soul," will become most pure in heart, and will have most legibly inscribed on their character and conduct, "Holiness unto the Lord." With what propriety and force then did the Saviour pray for His disciples, "Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth." "Thy word, the word of no other, is truth." "How, then, shouldest Thou not grant the sanctification prayed for ?" †

But we must not forget the Divine source or

* Titus i. 1.

† Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Handbook on the Gospel of St. John *in loc.* (Clark's ed.)

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agent of this blessing as involved in the prayer, "*Sanctify them through Thy truth.*" The prayer was to God, for He was the Sanctifier. It was not in the truth itself to sanctify, any more than it is in the sword to slay. The word must be wielded by an almighty hand. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth. Our Lord's farewell discourse, which preceded this prayer, abounds in promises of the gift and grace of the Holy Ghost for the fulfilment of His mission in connexion with the truth. He alone can apply the truth with a sanctifying and consecrating power—using it as a light to search, the secret recesses of the soul, as a hammer to break the stony hardness of the heart, as a fire to melt the obduracy and consume the sinful dross of our nature; as a sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

The Lord Jesus does not say, as some of this world's would-be philosophers would have said, "O Truth, sanctify them," ascribing all the virtue to the truth itself; nor does He say, "Father, grant

* Heb. iv. 12.

that the truth may sanctify them ; ” but “ Sanctify them through Thy truth. ” The operation is different from the instrument ; both are divine, and the issue is holiness in the heart and the life. All goodness is in God, and all goodness in us must be from God ; our help, therefore, is in the Spirit of truth for all enlightenment and purity. The pure in heart alone shall see God, and only the sanctified are meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is possible to have a familiarity with the word, which does not sanctify the soul, and possible even to hold the truth in unrighteousness ; it is only when the Divine Spirit uses the truth, and applies it within, that the grand result is secured, and likeness to God produced in the character and life.

XI.

***CHRIST'S CONSECRATION FOR HIS
PEOPLE.***

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“As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”
—JOHN xvii. 18, 19.

THE Saviour here advances two other pleas for His petition that His disciples might be preserved in the world, and kept from its evil. The first is connected with His own mission in the world, and the second with His consecration. It was not merely on their own account that their preservation was necessary, but on account also of their position and duty amongst men. They were to be sent forth into the world by Christ, even as Christ Himself had been sent by the Father; and for the sake of their mission it was essential that they should be kept in holiness and confirmed in

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truth. And that they might be true to their mission as messengers of Christ, He devoted Himself as the servant of the Most High, and unsparingly surrendered Himself to all that His own mission required. Their Master, you perceive, did not merely leave them in the world, He sent them into it on a mission similar in purpose and spirit to that on which the Father had sent Him into it.

I. The mission of the disciples. "*As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*" They were sent forth by the same authority, for the same purpose, and to a similar experience. The language is grand and impressive, containing ideas of dignity and responsibility which cannot be exaggerated.

The disciples were sent forth by the same or kindred authority with their Master. The language here used by our Lord could not be used by any mere man, for it evidently suggests the idea of equal or co-ordinate authority belonging to the Father and the Son—the Father sending Christ, and Christ sending His Apostles. Just as He had on a previous occasion said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." We have thus an assurance

of His Divine mission. He knew that He was sent of God ; it was not a matter of conjecture, but of personal knowledge. This truth had come to Him, and was in Him, when, as a boy, He said to His mother, on finding Him in the Temple with the Doctors, " Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? " *

How soon the mysterious fact of His Divine personality and heavenly mission dawned upon His human soul we cannot say ; but the majesty and momentousness of the fact grew upon Him as " He increased in wisdom and stature." When a man knows what he can do, and what he has to do in life, he is in the fittest condition for doing it. Jesus knew that He was sent into the world, and for what ; and He was equal to it, for His words may be interpreted also as an assertion of His Divine authority. Whatever authority belonged to the Father in sending the Son into the world, the same authority belonged to the Son in sending forth His disciples. The language which Jesus uses could not be used by any mere man without presumption or blasphemy. It is quiet, definite,

* Luke ii. 49.

clear, without mock humility on the one hand or vainglory on the other—language which the Speaker felt Himself in all respects entitled to use: “As Thou hast sent me, so send I them.”

Further, the Apostles were sent forth for a kindred purpose with their Master. This is evidently involved in His words: “As Thou hast sent me, so send I them.” Their mission was in many respects like His own. Christ was the Light of the world, but His radiance was to a great extent to shine through their lives and labours, so that they too were in their measure lights of the world. The mission of the Son of God was personal and peculiar, and could neither have extension nor repetition. “Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”* To proclaim this sacrifice, to make known the power and purpose of the death of Christ, was the mission of the disciples in the world. You remember the Saviour’s words before Pilate: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”† Connect with this declaration

* Heb. ix. 26.

† John xviii. 37.

the words of Paul, "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,"* and you see how the mission of the Master and that of the disciples coincide in their design. Both were for the glory of God and the salvation of men ; both were for the establishment of righteousness and the overthrow of sin. Christ came to "destroy the works of the devil," † "to destroy him that had the power of death." ‡ When the seventy disciples, whom He sent out, came back and reported, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name," their Master replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." § Thus, as He was sent for the honour of the Father, the blessing of men, and the overthrow of hell, so He sent forth His disciples for the same high ends.

Their experience also was in many respects like His. As the world treated the Master, so it treated the servants. Christ Jesus was sent to poverty, shame, and suffering ; and did He not tell His disciples that in the world they were to expect

* 2 Cor. iv. 2.

† 1 John iii. 8.

‡ Heb. ii. 14.

§ Luke x. 17, 18.

tribulation? "The servant is not greater than his Lord: if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."* The Saviour "endured the cross, despising the shame," and said to His followers, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."† As the Son of God was in the world, so are His disciples, and the offence of the cross has not yet ceased. No real permanent good amongst men has ever yet been done without a cross; the highest triumphs of holy light and liberty in human society have been secured or promoted by the bonds, imprisonment, and death of the saints of God. Thus the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sin and a ransom for the souls of men, and the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church. And as in the case of the Master, so in the case of His disciples now, "No cross, no crown." Here then to the Apostles, sent forth as Christ was, by the same authority, on a similar mission, to a like experience, there was the loftiest privilege. They had the credentials of heaven with them wherever they went; and as living epistles of

* John xv. 20.

† Matt. xvi. 24.

Christ they were to be known and read of all men, for His honour on the earth, and for the highest blessing to the world itself. Much therefore did they need to be kept from the evil that abounded in it. And the grandest means to this end was—

II. The consecration of the Master: "*For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*" In these words we have the highest plea presented by our Lord on behalf of the preservation and sanctification of the disciples. The Messiah makes, as we have seen, their imperfect attainment and their glorious mission the ground of His prayer on their behalf, and now presents His own work, and its special relation to them, as a final motive for their thorough consecration. "For their sakes I sanctify myself." This word *sanctify*, in its application to Himself, cannot be used by our Lord in the ordinary sense of being made holy; for "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." As has been already said, the most simple and general meaning of the word is to set apart to a sacred use, to set apart with a special reference to God. By Christ's sanctifying Himself we are to under-

stand His devotement of Himself to the will of the Father, the surrender of Himself as a sacrifice for sin, the climax of which was at hand in His death on the cross.* “I sanctify myself.” This is the language of One who had perfect control over His own course and action. His was self-consecration; there was no constraint, save that of love and pity. They are the words of One who was under no obligation to place Himself in the position of having to utter them. “He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Accordingly, His consecration was sacrificial. It could not be a consecration to holiness, for He “knew no sin;” it could not mean that in sanctifying Himself His heart or life was undergoing a purifying process such as is necessary in the case of all His disciples. His consecration was exclusively in devoting Himself to do all that was necessary for human

* “The disciples are, through the sacrifice of Jesus, to be consecrated to God *in the sense of holy purity, endowment, and equipment* for their calling. On the other hand, the self-consecration of Christ is *sacrificial*; the former, however, like the latter, the consecration in the service of God and of His kingdom.”—*Meyer's Handbook in loc.* (Clark's ed.)

deliverance and salvation. In the case of Levitical sacrifices the victims were separated from the flock or herd, and specially set apart to sacred use ; in other words, consecrated to God. Thus Jesus sanctified Himself, gave Himself to poverty, to suffering and death, to the agony and shame of the cross, in order that our consecration to God, and acceptance with Him, might be rendered possible. His consecration was then advancing to its consummation. In this mysterious sacrifice there are depths which we cannot fathom, and heights to which we cannot soar. He was "made to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."* In the profoundest sense He consecrated Himself for man ; our cause He undertook, our interests He had in view, our good He sought. "*For their sakes*," for their benefit, in their stead, that they may be sanctified and consecrated. The preposition translated *for their sakes* is very expressive,† and involves advantage, on their account, of every kind. To this the Saviour gave Himself in all His humiliation.

But how could this consecration of Christ Jesus

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† ὑπέρ.

be for the sanctification of His disciples? how did His operate in influencing theirs? wherein is the connexion between them? The consecration of Christ had what may be called a *legal* power, making their consecration possible. The sacrifice which the Son of God presented, in making His soul an offering for sin, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,"* was the ransom price of our redemption. He died to take away our guilt, and by His obedience unto death provide a righteousness through which God can be just, and the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. Many dwell largely and exclusively on the moral force of Christ's consecration, its subjective power in man's soul, and deny its objective place and influence in the government of God; but its influence and bearing on our sanctification are essentially connected with the deliverance which it secures for us from the guilt and condemnation of sin. If Christ Jesus had not become a curse for us, the curse could not have passed from us, and man could not have been set apart or sanctified for God. Doubtless the consecration of Jesus had

* Eph. v. 2.

a mighty *moral* power, making the sanctification of the disciples not only possible, but sure. Christ Himself was the power and the wisdom of God, and His sanctification for their sakes was the very means adapted to purify the heart and destroy in them the power of the world and sin. They saw Him in the mystery of His consecration fighting for them, sympathising with them, and accomplishing for them what none but He as the Messiah could do, and leaving them an example, that they should follow His steps. What mere authority could not do, God effected through His only begotten Son. In the likeness of sinful flesh He condemned sin in the flesh. In daily contact and converse with Him they saw the beauties of holiness, heard the voice of love, learned the lessons of humility, caught the spirit of benevolence, and breathed the very air of heaven. Truth in all its purifying and transforming power reached them through the consecration of their Lord ; for thus they saw the things of God as they had never been unfolded before. And through the truth so reaching them they were themselves sanctified in their own characters, and trained and equipped for their

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glorious work. The Lord says, "I sanctify myself;" but they had to be sanctified—they could not sanctify themselves. The contrast is marked and manifest. His sanctification was voluntary and spontaneous—theirs was a blessing to be secured for them, a process to be carried on in them, and this process was to be done "through the truth." Our Lord refers to this principle again. The margin reads *truly sanctified*, as the original simply reads *in truth*, without the definite article, so that critics differ as to the real force and meaning of the expression. Several thoughts are suggested by it, all of which are practically important.

Truth is the *element* of sanctification, the sphere in which it is realized and enjoyed. It is only when we are in the truth, when we know it, and are in Him that is true, that we can be sanctified. Christ is "the truth," and true purity of heart is possible only to those who are in Him. Holiness and true consecration to God for the full attainment of the Divine nature in man can be realized only by those who know the truth, and are in Him that is true, even as the plant, to grow

and bear fruit, must be in the soil as the sphere of its life and fertility.

Truth is the *instrument* of sanctification. Through its influence within, wielded by the Divine Spirit, the soul becomes weaned from the world, separated from sin, and conformed to the image of God. It is not an outward service, or an imposing ritual, or an exciting ceremony, which can sanctify, but the truth of God only, received into the heart, and applied by the Holy Spirit. "Now ye are clean," said the Saviour to His disciples, "through the word which I have spoken unto you ;" that word was all the truth which He had taught them, and it is the instrument of sanctification still. Fondness for the truth, and familiarity with it, is the Divine way to purity of heart and life. The entrance of the Divine word gives light, and light is always for holiness. Evil cannot dwell in the soul in which the truth of Christ dwells richly.

Truth is really the *end* of sanctification, so that holiness shall become triumphant in the heart and the history. This is the object to be realized and the goal to be reached. What is sanctification

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in every case but the reign of "truth in the inward parts"?* To be true men, true to God, true to ourselves, and true to our fellow-creatures—so true in thought and feeling, in word and action, as to clearly reflect the image of our Father, is the highest ambition which as moral creatures we can cherish. To know the truth, to do the truth, to hold forth the truth in the soul and in the life, is the very nature and end of sanctification—a personal consecration which makes us habitations of God through the Spirit. And this was secured for the Apostles, and is secured for all His disciples, by Christ's sanctification of Himself for them. The Saviour's power as a teacher and a sanctifier rests on His position as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; and the sanctifying influence of His truth comes to us still through the amazing fact of His consecration for us on the cross as a sacrifice to God.

* Ps. li. 6.

XII.

*THE EXTENSION OF THE SAVIOUR'S
PRAYER.*

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“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.”—JOHN xvii. 20, 21.

IN these verses we enter on the consideration of a new portion of this prayer. At this point there is an evident transition from one class of objects to another. Christ Jesus had been praying until now for His disciples then around Him. To them as His apostles great duties were assigned, and a great work committed, and they would be exposed to great dangers ; the Master therefore thought of their position and needs. All future ages of the Church were concerned in their mission and ministry, so that their preservation, sanctification, and success were of the first importance.

But as the mission of the Saviour was world-wide in its scope and purpose, His love and sympathy were commensurate with His mission. Hence He now proceeds in His prayer to comprehend the whole circle of His Church down to the end of time. As the Good Shepherd, He necessarily cared for all the sheep of every fold, and He looked down the vista of the ages to come, and His loving heart embraced all His disciples. Every one who now follows the Saviour may consider himself included in the gracious thoughtfulness and Divine affectionateness of this remarkable supplication. It is important to consider—

I. The widened scope and new objects of our Lord's petition. "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*" When He utters these words, He intercedes for the Church universal, and takes in all His disciples in every generation. It is as if He said, "Nor do I ask these things for my apostles only, who are now hearing me, but for all my disciples in all coming time." The blessings which He had asked for those around Him He

asked for all who should believe on Him to the end of the world. These "good things" were especially preservation and sanctification, fidelity and holiness—blessings asked for us and for the poorest and feeblest of His followers in every age. It is a most cheering and encouraging truth that thus He thought of us and prayed for us. Can He then forget us now, when He sees us struggling in the Christian race, and fighting the good fight of faith in His name and under His standard, and exposed to the trials and evils of the world? It is impossible. There is important instruction suggested in the words, "which shall believe on me through their word." It is in this way that we have become disciples; in truth, the only way by which men can become Christians now—through the word of the Apostles. They spoke and wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of God; for the words of our Lord apply not only to the oral or spoken addresses of the Apostles, but also to their writings, in which they were to speak to men down to the end of time. The whole New Testament may thus, in a literary sense, be regarded as the apostolic word, and Christ Jesus has accepted this

word as a true and faithful testimony of Himself. Here the Apostles declare unto us what they heard and saw with their eyes and looked upon, and what their hands "handled of the word of life." * We can believe in Christ only through their word, as we reach the knowledge of Him so as to trust Him only through their testimony regarding Him. Yet many in our day call themselves Christians without placing full reliance on the apostolic word. They treat it with a sceptical criticism which rejects what is supernatural, and destroys all that is distinctively Christian. But what could we know of Christ were it not for the New Testament? If our Lord's words here have any meaning, they mean that disciples of Christ are now made and must be made through belief of the great facts made known to the world by the word and testimony of the Apostles. It is not necessary to discuss any special theory of inspiration either for its exposition or defence; but it is necessary to understand our Lord as here implicitly declaring that the books written by His Apostles, and constituting the New Testament, are the vehicle by which the

* 1 John i. 1.

knowledge of the Saviour is brought down to men. We know nothing of His miraculous birth, glorious life, and sacrificial death, of His human history and mediatorial reign, but through the word of the disciples whom He personally instructed and filled with His spirit for this particular mission. Vast, then, is the importance of our receiving their testimony. We see here and admire the very simplicity of the means of Christian discipleship. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach."* The belief or reception of the Apostles' word respecting Christ is the first element or condition of Christian discipleship. Just as we cherish, grasp, and obey this word shall we grow up into Him in all things as our Divine Head and Lord. Blessed is that man who can say, "I am a disciple of Christ, one of those for whom the Lord Jesus thus prayed; He is my Intercessor, and is

* Romans x. 6—8.

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here pleading for me. This prayer is a shield over me, its glory overshadows me, its grace refreshes me. I am one of this company, one in this line of succession from the Apostles and first disciples ; so that this supplication of the Son of God encompasses even me." This is a blessedness which the world in all its bestowments cannot give, and which, in all its deprivations and trials, it cannot take away. But what is—

II. The end to be gained by the blessings sought for? "*That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us.*" This is the glorious issue contemplated, and which arises out of the realization and enjoyment of the blessings asked for. If Christian disciples are preserved, sanctified, and consecrated by God, and for Him, their real oneness will necessarily appear. This oneness is not the immediate subject of the supplication, but is asked for through the realization of the other spiritual blessings. Yet this serves all the more to show its high importance as in one sense an end for which to be kept from evil and consecrated to God is but as the means. In proportion to the purity and devotion of the

disciples of the Saviour will their oneness be blessedly and triumphantly manifest.

What, then, is this oneness, which in the thought of the Redeemer was so desirable an object ? The views of many regarding it are very erroneous. There is a continual and widespread tendency to confound it with uniformity of creed, polity, and worship. But uniformity is compatible with spiritual sterility and death. There may be unity without uniformity, and there may be uniformity without unity. In the planks of a timber yard, sawn of equal length, breadth, and thickness, there is uniformity, but it is the uniformity of death, without unity. In the trees of the wood or forest there is unity of life and general structure, with great diversity of form, fibre, and foliage. The very absence of uniformity adds to the impressiveness of the unity which responds in every trunk and branch and leaf to the quickening influences of the spring and the calm decay of autumn. The uniformity of a Church or society may be like the uniformity of a graveyard in which all the tombs, monuments, and headstones are of one pattern ; but unity can be found only amongst the living.

Few evils have been fraught with more evil to the Church of Christ throughout its history than the confounding of uniformity with unity, and insisting on the former for the sake and with the hope of securing the latter.

The oneness which the Saviour sought amongst His disciples was a Divine thing—Divine in its element and Divine in its model.

I. Divine in its model: "*That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee.*" These words remind us of those spoken at first, at the creation of man, when Jehovah said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Here is a unity between the disciples of the Lord Jesus, after the pattern of the unity between the Father and the Son—a wonderful truth in its application to us. The Saviour speaks as the man Christ Jesus, as our Mediator and Intercessor—not in relation to His essential Godhead, but to His incarnate form. As the meek and spotless Jesus of Nazareth, He could say, "As Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee." This unity involves several points—oneness of life, character, and enjoyment; and as this exists in perfection

between the Father and the Son, so must it prevail in a measure in the oneness which exists between all the true and faithful followers of Christ Jesus. There is the unity of life: "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."* This oneness of life is the foundation of the offices with which Jesus is invested, and of the functions which He has to discharge as the Saviour of mankind. After this model is the union of believers: they are begotten again through the same word of truth, born from above by the grace of the same quickening Spirit, pervaded by the same principle of spiritual life, partakers of the same Divine nature, and adopted into the same family. How diversified soever they may be in age, or station, or attainment, they are all regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit of God, so that they possess a real oneness of life—the life of the new creation in Christ Jesus. It is also a unity of character. The moral character of the Father and the Son is one, for Jesus is "the image of the invisible God." The Apostles beheld in Him "the glory as of

* John v. 26.

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the only begotten of the Father." He presented in His human life all the moral perfection of the Divine character. The oneness of all Christian disciples is after this model—a unity of character, conformed to the same image, though in widely differing degrees of conformity. In so far as they are Christian, and after the pattern of Christ, they see alike, feel alike, act alike on all moral questions. They must all have the spirit of Christ; for unless they have it, they are none of His: they must all hate sin, crucify the flesh, live by faith, and seek to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Just as they come under the full power of His religion must there be unity of spirit, disposition, and conduct in the disciples of the Lord Jesus. United to Him, they set their affections on things above, and guide their course by the same holy principles of faith and love. Further, it is a unity of enjoyment. The joy of the Father was the delight of the incarnate Son: in blessedness they are one. The pleasure of Jehovah was the gladdening exercise and joyous occupation of Jesus of Nazareth. This was the joy set before Him, and after this model is the

happiness of all His disciples. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps their hearts and minds. Through faith and love they partake of a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, and all rejoice in God through their Lord Jesus Christ. *All* drink of the water of that river which makes glad the city of God, and their purest joy is centred in things heavenly and Divine. The felicity and gladness connected with their earthly life may vary in character as in degree; but the true repose and blessedness of all followers of the Son of God must in its nature be essentially the same, coloured or diversified only by attainment, temperament, and taste. Thus the oneness between the disciples of Christ is after the model of the oneness between Christ and the eternal God. But there is much in such a theme too high for us to reach.

2. From the words of our Lord it is likewise evident that this oneness is Divine in its sphere as well as its model. "That they may be one in us"—one in the Father and the Son. It is obvious that Christ Jesus here claims for Himself an equality with God in their relation to

the real oneness of the Christian life, or the true unity of all Christians. No mere man, without blasphemy, could use such language as this. Here we are taught the only sphere in which Christian unity can be realized, in which it can become the experience or possession of the souls of men: it is in the reconciling Father and the redeeming Son. This is the sole elemental sphere of real Christian unity. Very different are the thoughts of men on this great matter. The world says, "Let nations be one in the reciprocities of commerce; let free trade bind human tribes together with the bonds of its golden girdle; let brotherhood be realized in the mysteries of freemasonry; let unity become a fact for mankind through the sceptre and shield of a universal monarchy." But the disruption and discord made by sin defy all such efforts at unification. Even the Church has said, "Let us make oneness by the bonds of the same ecclesiastical polity and by the use of the same liturgical service; let us compel men to oneness of creed and worship by the force of law, or allure them at least to the appearance of it by the power of state patronage

and worldly pomp." Christ says in this prayer to the Father, "Let them be one in us." No-where else, and in no other way, can this oneness become a spiritual fact. Not in the same religious denomination, not in the same doctrinal subscription, not in the same liturgical forms, not in the same ecclesiastical polity, is the sphere of this unity found, but in God and Christ, in God through Christ. Just as men are "accepted in the Beloved," and are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and dwell under the shadow of the Almighty, do they share in the unity contemplated in the Saviour's prayer.

III. And mark the grand purpose contemplated in the realization of this oneness: "*That the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.*" Only let the disciples of Christ Jesus show their essential oneness in God, and how mighty and wonderful would be the influence on the world. The stronger the pulses of spiritual life beat in Christian souls, the closer and the more manifest will this unity be. It is the unity of the vine, each branch, twig, tendril, and leaf of which receives its life-sap from the same root, through the same parent stem.

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Such is the unity of the Church of God, a unity which cannot be forced, and which cannot be secured by any ecclesiastical doctrine or discipline, but which flows from God through Christ alone. The growing influence of this increasingly manifested oneness on the world produces the conviction that Jesus Christ had indeed a Divine mission, and has left on earth a power or kingdom of truth mightier by far than all the systems which have claimed human allegiance, or have sought to draw and weld together the hearts of men. There is a close connexion between this oneness of the Church and the conversion of the world to Christ. One of the greatest obstacles to the triumphs of the gospel is in the contentions, schisms, and separations which have prevailed in the Church of Christ. The evidences of essential unity, recognisable by the world, have been few and feeble, and the power of the Church for good has been proportionately paralysed. But when the world sees the Church, in all its sections, drawn and knit together by this power of love, not to profess the same polity, or to put on the same ecclesiastical form, but above all these, and

in spite of intellectual differences and various ceremonial, to show its oneness in Christ the living Head, then will the world believe that Jesus Christ has come as the sent of God for the cure of its ills and the relief of all its woes. It is not difficult to see how this living and manifest unity of spirit and hope would operate in convincing the world, and operate all the more powerfully in the very midst of the diversities of opinion and form which prevail. Would not this oneness be a triumph of Christian love? "God is love," but where is the evidence of this amidst the jealousy, sectarianism, and contentions of the disciples of Christ? In the first age of the Church the evidence was often impressive, and the heathen around them were led to exclaim, "See how these Christians love each other." So it should be still; but, alas! it is far from being the case. The spiritual oneness of the Church more thoroughly manifested would bespeak a love rising above prejudice, sectarianism, and bigotry, and binding in holy bonds of benevolence and affection men of every country, colour, and clime. The majesty and force of this love would give evidence of its heavenly origin, and

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before such a love the world would believe in the Son of God. This practical love would prove the Divinity of the religion which we profess. To behold the unity of life in the Church of God clearly manifested in the midst of differing forms of polity and differing creeds, would be to witness the evidence of a power beyond all human power, drawing men from sin and selfishness, and binding them together in devotion to Christ as

“ The sacramental host of God's elect.”

Thus would the incarnate Son of God be proved to be the mighty moral magnet of the universe, and the only hope of our ruined race, at once the Saviour and the Lord of men.

XIII.

***THE CHURCH'S UNITY AND ITS
INFLUENCE***

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“And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one : I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.”—JOHN xvii. 22, 23.

HOW diversified are human ideas of glory ! Many and widely different are the subjects to which men attach the epithet glorious. But what, of all things which in this world are called glorious, can be compared with the glory of which the Saviour speaks in these words ? As coming from Him, and conferred by Him, it is the only glory which can make a human life truly beautiful and blessed, and which will make it shine for ever.

Two mistakes have been made by interpreters as to the meaning of this verse. Some say that the glory conferred by Christ is applicable only to

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the Apostles and to those assumed to be in what is called the "apostolical succession." This interpretation belongs entirely to those who assert that sacerdotalism is an essential element of Christianity—that the power of forgiving sin and effectually blessing sacraments is conferred on a special order of men in the Church. But you will observe that our Lord had passed from prayer for His immediate disciples, to pray for all who should believe on Him through their word ; so that the glory, whatever it is, belongs to all His true followers in every age of the Church to the end of time. The other false interpretation to which I refer is that which regards this glory as altogether future, as a blessing or dignity too grand and too good for the present life and this world. But the Saviour says, "I have given," not "I will give ;" and we may be assured the glory is something received, enjoyed, and manifested here on earth.

The words now before us for consideration were uttered by our Lord as an additional plea for the true oneness of all who should believe in Him, and a further explanation of that oneness. Notice first—

I. The gift which Christ bestows on His disciples: "*The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them.*" In order to understand what the Saviour here gives, we must understand what He received from the Father.

1. What, then, was the glory which He received? The gift must of course refer to His mediatorial position as the servant of the Father. A glory belonged to the Son of God, which He did not receive—a glory which belonged to Him in His own Divine right, and was essential to His Being and Godhead. To this He refers in the fifth verse of the chapter. But the glory given to Him must refer to His position as the Messiah, and His mission in becoming incarnate, and entering our world "in the likeness of sinful flesh," to do the will of the Father. It was the glory of being the Divine messenger. He was the "Angel of the Covenant," the Anointed of the Most High, who came into the world bringing God's message to sinful men, to bear witness unto the truth, and to be "the truth" in a world from which truth had taken its flight through the malignity of Satan and the sin of men—a world which had been

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desolated and cursed by a lie. Christ Jesus was sent by God to bring truth back again, to embody in His own person the grandest verities connected with God, and man's relations to Him, against whom we had rebelled. He was a Teacher sent from God, sent to unfold and teach all the truth which we required to know for the spiritual renewal and everlasting welfare of our being, so that He proclaimed Himself as the "Light of the world." And was there not a glory in being so commissioned,—that of all beings in the universe He should be selected as the messenger of God, sent to this world with a message of unparalleled grace, which was confirmed by the mightiest signs and wonders? The character of God and the circumstances of man alike proclaim and prove that this was glory.

It was the glory of being the Divine agent. Jesus Christ came to act for God, and to do His will, as well as to declare His truth. The work which He came to do was full of grace as really as of truth—the work of saving a lost and ruined race. How much of true glory was there in such godlike action and enterprise as this! When the Creator

“appointed the foundations of the earth,” Wisdom’s “delights were with the sons of men.” In His incarnation He breathed forth the richest grace and good-will to the fallen creatures. While on earth, He went about doing good. Human misery received His pity, human suffering ever found compassion and relief from Him, and human weakness met with His thoughtful and tender consideration. For the accomplishment of His enterprise, and the consummation of His work, how much did He endure of reproach, shame, and suffering, dying at length on a cross, and descending into the grave for us! If there be greatness in a noble self-denying deed, if there be glory in providing for the safety and happiness of a single soul, what must be the glory of giving His life as a ransom for the redemption of a sin-stricken race? This was the glory which was given to Jesus Christ. In the synagogue at Nazareth He applied to Himself the words of the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight

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to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”* How wonderful the glory of such a mission!

Further, it was the glory of being the Divine representative. This may in a sense be regarded as the highest aspect of the glory given to Him. Man had forgotten his Maker; “the world by wisdom knew not God.” Jesus Christ came to show us the Father, to manifest the Divine name and character amongst men. He was “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.”† Those who looked to Him and listened to Him beheld and heard incarnate Deity, “God manifest in the flesh.” He appeared on earth, that men might behold and love in Him the graces and glories of the infinite God. His course as the man Christ Jesus was a copy and living map of the expanse of the Divine perfections. Over His character and conduct was the inscription legible and clear, “Emmanuel, God with us,” so that sinful men saw in Him the glory of the only begotten Son of God. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which

* Luke iv. 18, 19. . † Heb. i. 3.

is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."*

Such is the glory that was given to Jesus in His human nature and His relation to God, and such is the glory which He gives to His disciples.

2. Look, then, on this side of the truth—the glory communicated by Christ. We are led back to the consideration of the same points in their application to the Saviour's followers, since He gives to them what He has received. Clearly the glory which Christ Jesus confers has no reference to any perishable wealth or worldly honour; for in His mediatorial position here that did not belong to Him: "the Son of man had not where to lay His head." The glory is that of spiritual blessedness, moral character, and evangelistic mission—a glory which the world now is slow to recognize in the case of the disciples, as it was in the case of the Master when He sojourned among men. Yet assuredly it is the purest, the best, the weightiest glory which can adorn humanity. It is the glory of being the messengers of God. Even as the Father sent Christ into the world, so does Christ

* John i. 18.

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send His disciples.* They have to make known among men the message which He brought from heaven, to tell the same glad tidings, to bear witness to the same saving truth. This honour have all the saints; God has put the treasure of His truth into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be exclusively His own. Every Christian disciple, every one who experimentally knows the joyful sound of the gospel, is sent forth into the world, even as Christ Jesus came, with heaven's message of peace, righteousness, and mercy. Thus the followers of the Saviour share in the glory of their Master as messengers of God. He came as the Light of the world, so in and through Him they are the light of the world. By them the gospel is to be spread, the world to be evangelized, and the knowledge of God's salvation made known to the ends of the earth. We do not think enough of the privilege and duty connected with this glory which Christ gives to all His disciples. As the messengers of God, sent by Him, we are bound to hold forth the word of life amongst men, and to do this in every way that we

* John xx. 21.

can, by our lips and our lives, testifying to the grace and character of our Father in heaven as displayed by His unspeakable gift.

It is the glory of being the agents of God. The disciples of the Son of God are represented as "the salt of the earth," as well as "the light of the world," so that they are agents as truly as messengers—have a work to do, as well as a testimony to deliver. They are to do good unto all men as they have opportunity. As the glory of Christ consisted in doing the will of God, in being about the business of His Father, so in the same should the glory of all Christians be found; for each of them has in the world a work to do for God. They are honoured to be His agents and remembrancers amongst men. By whom are His high behests to be carried out on the earth, if not by those who acknowledge Him as their reconciled Father and Almighty Friend? The glory given to Christ was to accomplish His will by active service and patient suffering, and the glory which Christ gives to the disciples lies in following the Master, who went about doing good. What honour can equal this in a world full of sin and sorrow? In the fire of

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holy zeal, in the outgoing of devoted effort, in the spirit of earnest prayer, in the active energy of self-denial, in the offering of personal and living service as a sacrifice to God, there is greater and more lasting glory than in all the exploits of carnal ambition, and all the victories of warlike heroism or generalship emblazoned in the world's history. Thus do we receive glory from the Son of God, and share in the glory which was given to Him.

It is the glory of being the representatives of God. Wondrous truth, yet how little thought of! The privilege of representing God, how glorious! and the responsibility, how vast! In Jesus there shone forth the glory of the only begotten of the Father, and His true disciples receive of His glory, even grace for grace. God has two revelations of Himself in the world, that in His word, and another in the souls and lives of His people. The revelation in the Bible is often disregarded and often misunderstood, but the revelation in the lives of Christians is more generally read and more easily apprehended. They are partakers of the Divine nature, born from above, transformed into the image of their Lord, by His gracious

Spirit, and are to walk in Christ, seeking to show the same mind as was in Him. Thus, as He was the visible image of the invisible God, they in their new and heavenly nature are to represent Him among men. The world judges of God, of Christ, of religion, not so much by what the Bible says, as by what they see in the lives of those who profess to be Christians. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! To be the messengers, agents, and representatives of God in the world is man's highest honour; but this glory is given only to those who are in Christ, His disciples in deed and in truth. Men seek glory for themselves in the material resources, social attractions, and artistic splendours of the world. The glory of being rich, or powerful, or learned, or famous, is eagerly sought after. But all such glory, even if gained, will disappear or have to be left behind, and can be no lasting portion for the soul. The only solid and lasting glory is that which Christ bestows, and which consists in being like Him in character and service—a glory that will be remembered and made to shine forth at the

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manifestation of the sons of God at the end of all things, and amid the convulsions of nature.

II. Further note the design of this gift to the disciples : "*That they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.*" Our Lord here enlarges on the sentiment of the previous verse, and gives some additional thoughts regarding the oneness of His disciples, on which He was so intent. How important the unity on which the Son of God thus dwells ! Let us not, however, mistake or misunderstand it ; and the more important it is, the greater is the danger of this. All the attempts to enforce this unity which have arisen from confounding it with uniformity have only resulted in evil to the Church and mischief to the world. This glory is given by the Saviour in order to secure this oneness ; and wherever the glory makes itself appear and shine, you see the truest evidence of Christian discipleship, and the highest proof of Christian unity. Wherever you see a man living, acting, enduring, as the messenger, agent, and representative of God, you see one to whom the Son of God has given true

glory, and who is thereby at one with all true saints in every section of the Christian Church. The Saviour had just said that this oneness is Divine in its sphere and model. Now He adds some other thoughts regarding it, repeating to some extent what He had said before: "That they may be one, even as we are one." Now He indicates that this unity is glorious in its source: "*I in them, and Thou in me.*" God is in Christ, for in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and the participation of this unity depends on the enthronement of Christ in the soul. In no other way can it be secured. The unity between God and fallen man is realized only through Christ: hence the Saviour says, "*Thou in me, and I in them;*" so that God in Christ, and Christ in us, Christ living and reigning in us, is the principle of this glorious oneness. In this way only are Christians truly and vitally one. In the absence of the living Saviour from individual souls, no forced process of uniformity, no subscription merely of the same creed, can effect their union in one body. Even in human association it is not intellectual agreement, or

sameness of opinion, but sympathy of heart, which draws men together ; and no such power of sympathy can be found as that which flows from the enthronement of Christ Jesus in the soul. How much then is involved in these short and simple monosyllables, "I in them—Thou in me!" infinitely more than we can fathom. But blessed be God, as regards the human side of the truth, we may feel it—"I in them." He stands and knocks at the door of human hearts, so that men may let Him come in to the seat and centre and throne of their manhood. He, the Son of the Highest, the Redeemer of the world, and the Lord of life, is, within the souls who receive Him, the Light of the mind, the Guest of the heart, and the Master of the conscience. Thus, through enthronement in individuals, He becomes the Restorer of harmony to the universe. All things are reconciled in Him. He makes an end of sin, the principle of discord ; and only when He is received by faith into the soul is it united to the holy brotherhood of the universe. Christ is in all His true disciples ; in their understandings, as the object of the highest knowledge ; in their hearts, as the

King of love ; in their consciences, as the Prince of peace ; in their whole inner being, as the Lord of life, the Captain of salvation, and the Hope of glory. Thus He becomes the true principle and bond of all unity. Men may talk of world-wide peace and universal brotherhood, but these are impossible as the result of mere political economy in a world of discord and sin. The personal enthronement of Christ in the hearts of men is the living principle of true unity between them. "I in them."

This oneness is gradual in its realization : "*That they may be made perfect in one*"—that they may be perfected into one. It is not realized at once, nor in a generation, nor indeed, according to the testimony of facts, in many generations. Many things hinder the complete enthronement of Christ in the soul, and so many hindrances prevent the perfecting of the Church's oneness. Christians, instead of showing their essential unity, have appeared to be the fiercest and most uncompromising foes. But all hindrances to this manifested unity will yet be overcome, and all difficulties taken out of the way. Their oneness as disciples of

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Jesus will be perfected as they realize and show the glory given to them by their living Lord. It will not be reached by Acts of Uniformity or sameness of ecclesiastical ritualism ; but these things as barriers, which indeed they are, will be broken down by Christians striving more and more to show their true glory in carrying out the holy purpose and dignity of their Christian life. The honour conferred by Him will draw them more closely to the Master and more heartily to each other. It is the glory that He bestows which transforms souls, welds human hearts together, and harmonizes holy lives. Every effort to show that glory, by Christians living and acting as messengers, agents, and representatives of God in the world, most truly promotes this vital oneness, and helps forward this unity, in spite of all the divisions of the Church, and in the very midst of them.

This triumph of unity is a grand design, the very highest which can be realized in relation to the Church. Sin is the element of discord, and the principle of dissocialism and separation in the world ; and God's great purpose for the destruc-

tion of this discord and the restoration of true harmony is the establishment of a holy brotherhood in Christ, the living Centre and personal Head of men. By Him God is to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven; and as heart after heart yields to the Saviour, and receives Him to its throne, the basis of this living and lasting unity is widened. In this glorious design we as disciples of the Lord individually have an influence and a share. Finally, consider—

III. The glorious end to be accomplished by the realization of this design: "*That the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.*" In the twenty-first verse the Lord Jesus had adduced the same object to be gained by the manifested oneness of His disciples; namely, the conviction and conversion of the world—"that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me;" here He says that the world may know. Knowledge is belief or faith in its highest attainment. Through faith comes consciousness and experience. The growing oneness of the disciples, the clear and living unity of the Church,

would be to the world an evidence of Christian truth, and the triumph of Christian love, mighty and irresistible. The Saviour saw the danger of strifes and contentions in the Church, what dishonour they would bring upon religion, and what offence or stumbling-block they would be to the world; hence His earnest anxiety for the real oneness of all His followers, that it might be clearly seen in the shining of their true glory; not that they might all see and think alike, but that while differently minded on many things, they might prove their strong love to each other, and heartily and joyously act together in the work and progress of His kingdom amongst men.

But Christ Jesus gives here an additional thought: "*That the world may know that Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.*" This grand conviction would be produced in the world by the growing union and manifested unity of all Christian people. Through this conviction alone, of God's infinite love, do the children of the world become the children of God. The differences and contentions of the Church, the bickerings and bigotry of the sects, have actually been hiding this truth, and so

keeping back the conviction and conversion of the world. What an exhibition of the exceeding riches of Divine grace in the gift of God's only begotten Son would this oneness supply! Men would see in Christ's influence, and in His religion, a power far mightier than all the separating influence of the sects, a power that draws human hearts together, not merely under the same name, but under the same personal authority, and in joyful recognition of the same sceptre of righteousness and love. From the united zeal and burning love of the Church the world would learn that Jesus of Nazareth, the founder of the Christian name, was truly the Son of God and the Saviour of humanity.

This oneness, moreover, would show the exceeding blessedness of consecration to God. It would give evidence that God loves the Church, even as He loves His own only begotten Son. These are words of wondrous depth and glorious meaning. Their full force is vastly greater than we can apprehend. The assertion is not merely that God loves Christ, and loves His disciples also, but that He loves them in the same way as He loves their Saviour and Lord. Is not this a blessedness of

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privilege, which when seen and known might well tend to draw the world from unbelief and sin? Thus the growing oneness of the Church would be a continually increasing power against the darkness and wickedness of the world at large. Men will not, cannot, believe that God has sympathy with the bigotry of those who profess to be His children, and with the contentions and divisions of Christians. Only as Christians love each other, and show their true moral glory, do they give evidence that God delights in them, and makes them the subjects of His salvation. Every one of them, therefore, has to do with the right influence of Christianity amongst men. Just as we show the glory bestowed on us by our Lord and Master do we promote the unity which will bless a gain-saying and thoughtless world.

XIV.

THE BEATIFIC VISION OF CHRIST.



XIV.

THE BEATIFIC VISION OF CHRIST.

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me : for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”—JOHN xvii. 24.

OUR Lord here advances to the last, and what may be called the loftiest, part of His prayer. He had prayed for the preservation, for the purity, the unity, the usefulness of His disciples, and now He prays for their glorification. He had desired for them the best blessings which they could receive in this world ; and now He asks for the highest blessing which they could receive in the world to come. Grace upon grace for them in time, and glory in eternity—to be at home in heaven with Himself for ever ! Blessed is it for those who, as pilgrims, passing through this world, can hear the echo of the Saviour’s words in applica-

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tion to themselves: "*Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory.*"

I. Weigh this petition. The disciples are prayed for under the terms, "those whom Thou hast given me"—all believers, the whole Church of God through all time, as the gift of the Father to the incarnate Son. Not one is overlooked or forgotten. The gift, then, in its magnitude, resolves itself into the multitude which no man can number before the throne of God on high, and "comes home to the heart of every individual with inexpressibly sweet assurance of an eternity with Christ." If we are trusting in the Lord Jesus, and realize union to Him, this petition is for us; we belong to the Redeemer, and have been given to Him. But how? In what sense is such language applicable and true? His disciples are given to Him as His reward, His possession, His kingdom, for ever. The heathen are promised to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.* The Church is given to Him by the Father, as the reward of His mighty enterprise and glorious

* Ps. ii. 8.

redeeming work. He has bought it with His blood, and it is given to Him to be the scene and subject of His quickening and renewing power, of His elevating and transforming influence, of the presence of His indwelling, enlightening, and comforting Spirit. It is given to Him in the sphere of His dominion, where His kingly authority, His wise and holy rule, may be realized and perpetuated, until all His enemies are put under His feet.

What does this petition involve? That they may "*be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me.*" I feel as if this theme were too high for human handling, and yet some unfolding of it may be attempted. By fellowship through faith with the Redeemer now we may, in a sense, see Him who is invisible, and rise to some feeble conception of what the contemplation of His glory must be to the saints in heaven. Several wonderful privileges are involved, of which, local association with Christ may be named first. "That they may be with me where I am." Where is Christ? The Saviour's words in His prayer, though in the present tense, point to the future, and refer to His abode in

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heaven, the scene of His royalty and glory after He had left the earth. Curious questions may be raised as to the locality, but we need not entertain them. Even astronomers now, in speaking of the orbits and motions and characters of the heavenly bodies, speak of a central system as the imperial metropolis of the universe, the special abode of manifested Deity, the celestial court of the Most High. But it matters little indeed where the place or region is, the significance is in the fact that it will be where Christ is, and to be with Him. This will be heaven, the eternal home of the redeemed, after all the probation and tribulations of earth are ended—the Father's house above, with its many mansions. "With me where I am" are simple but sublime words, sufficient to stir the soul with enthusiastic desire. Even here on earth, to know that we are near the object of loving confidence and cherished affection is a satisfaction and a joy. And if Christ Jesus were again on earth, so that we could actually be near Him, so as to hear Him, see Him, and go to Him bodily for counsel and sympathy,—this, to those who love Him, as they sometimes think, would

be bliss indeed. This position and privilege will belong to all His disciples hereafter, with a splendour and a felicity, a fulness and a freedom, impossible and even inconceivable now. Where He is, is the place of highest honour; for His throne is the centre of celestial glory, and around Him are gathered all the hierarchies of heaven. It is the place of safety; for where He is, who is the Conqueror of death and hell, no temptation can harass, no foe invade, no evil destroy. It is the place of felicity; for everlasting joy is upon the heads and dwells in the hearts of all who sing the new song and worship round about the throne. It is the place of beauty; for He is the centre of attraction, and His presence sends a glow of ineffable resplendence throughout all the plains of heaven—the radiance of His loveliness and beauty. Sometimes we complain of distance here. We cannot realize even spiritually our nearness to Christ. Carnal influences, worldly cares, and earthly vanities come between our souls and Him. But in the world to come, all sense of distance will be removed, and nearness will be realized as a constant joy.

Not only will there be local association with Christ, but personal fellowship with Him; not only to be where He is, but to be with Him there. It is possible to be near the object of affection, to be where he is, without the privilege of fellowship. "Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem," where the king his father was, and yet "saw not the king's face."* To be with Christ, then, is more than to be where He is; but how much more? Who can tell? In this world, amid much imperfection and many hindrances, the believer is with Christ in thought and desire, in sympathy and affection, in faith and hope. The words of St. John in relation to the spiritual privilege of this life are words of truth and reality: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."† Imperfect as is the measure of this attainment on earth, and modified as is our enjoyment of this privilege, is it not the highest solace of our mortal life? Occasionally we think perhaps of the blessedness it would have been to have sat with Mary at the feet of Jesus, to have met with Him in Bethany, or at Jacob's well, on the Mount

* 2 Sam. xiv. 28.

† 1 John i. 3.

of Olives, or on the shores of the Lake of Genesaret, and to have heard from His own lips the loving words of life and salvation. And it would have been blessedness indeed. But true disciples are not strangers to the blessedness of fellowship with Him whom unseen they love and adore. Yet how different, how infinitely superior, will be the fellowship reached and realized in heaven! It will be in perfect harmony, perfect sympathy, and perfect affection, without interruption, or hindrance, or imperfection for ever. To be with Christ will be the highest enjoyment of the redeemed soul; to be near Him, to commune with Him, to reign with Him, will be its blessedness, without cessation or end. Here difficulties intervene, obscurities arise, distractions come, infirmities press around us, so that our fellowship with the Lord is imperfect and partial; but in heaven it will be immediate, pure, uninterrupted, and eternal. If to be with Him in spiritual fellowship here is our highest and purest source of joy, what will the blessedness of communion be hereafter!

And, further, there will be the beatific vision of Christ. The Saviour prays that His disciples may

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behold His glory: "*That they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me.*" What this glory is, and what it will be to behold it, heart of man cannot conceive, and how can human tongue or pen describe it? It is not the essential glory of His Divine nature that is intended, for that was never given to Him; but the glory of His complex being as Emmanuel, the glory of the Divine and human natures in their combined effulgence in one person, the glory which belongs to Him as Mediator and Redeemer, the Conqueror of death and hell and sin. This glory was given to Him by the Father as the result of the Divine arrangement. It did not belong to Him before He became incarnate; it did not fully belong to Him on earth, for here it was veiled, with only an occasional outburst or manifestation; but it fills heaven with splendour and renown. Three disciples had a glimpse of it on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they were sore afraid as the bright cloud of that glory overshadowed them.* St. John saw it in Patmos, for he beheld the Saviour's countenance "as the sun shineth in his strength," and he fell at

* Matt. xvii. 5, etc.

His feet as dead.* Such was the power of even glimpses of that glory seen on earth ; but hereafter what will it be to behold it in all its resplendent fulness, when we are with Him in heaven ? It will be the glory of spotless perfection—of purity tried and triumphant in the person of Emmanuel—a strength of moral glory blazing forth in the union of the Divine and human natures, which adds radiance even to the holiness of heaven. In Him all the graces and beauties of perfection centre, and are seen for the admiration of saints and angels, world without end. Here His character was perfect, but the world saw no beauty in Him in the days of His flesh ; in heaven every eye will discern His beauty, and every spirit adore Him. It will be the glory of mediatorial triumph. Honour belongs to victory, and every true conqueror is glorified. How wondrous, then, the glory of Him who has fought the most momentous battle, vanquished the mightiest foes, and won the most important victory in the universe of God ! In Him and through Him truth and love, righteousness and peace, mercy and justice have triumphed over sin and hell and

* Rev. i. 16, 17.

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death. Holiness has proved mightier than evil, and mankind lost and ruined have been redeemed and regained to life and liberty. It will be the glory of universal dominion. He is exalted at God's right hand a Prince and a Saviour in the midst of the throne, and all power in heaven and on earth is His. Angels and principalities and powers worship Him and celebrate His praise ; for His name is above every name, and at it every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. He rules over all. His sceptre is the sceptre of righteousness ; His throne is everlasting, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. How marvellous and ineffable will this glory be ! the glory of the moral Sun of the Temple of the universe, sending forth His radiance to bless and beautify every creature there, and filling heaven in all its extent with the splendours of His effulgence.

The point of the Saviour's petition is that His disciples may be where He is, to behold this glory, to gaze upon it with unclouded vision and uninterrupted view. To be spectators there will be to be partakers too, for the one involves the other. "We shall be like Him," says St. John, "for we

shall see Him as He is ;” * “fashioned,” says St. Paul, “like unto His glorious body.” † What more can be said ? This glory seen will be glory felt, realized, and enjoyed by us. Thought trembles and language is burdened to pourtray the faintest idea of such a future for the saints of God. We seem able only to repeat the language and pause—
“THAT THEY MAY BE WITH ME, WHERE I AM, THAT THEY MAY BEHOLD MY GLORY.” This petition is for every disciple of the Lord Jesus, for every one who sincerely loves Him. Low, indeed, are our very loftiest thoughts in relation to this coming glory. What are the sweetest moments of life here ? the happiest seasons of our earthly lot ? Are they not those spent in communion with our Lord—when we feel that He is with us, and through His indwelling Spirit we realize the preciousness of His sacrifice and the blessedness of His love ? seasons which no worldly wealth could buy, which no human power could of itself secure ? Then the soul seems lifted up to taste the joys and have a glimpse here below of the splendours of heaven. Try to think of an eternity of such

* 1 John iii. 2.

† Phil. iii. 21.

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enjoyment—with our whole being prepared for it and able to apprehend and appreciate it. What is present trial, what are earthly sorrows, what is death itself, in view of such a future? We do not wonder that the Apostle who had been raised in ecstatic vision to the third heavens, and received some tokens of the future glory, should say, “I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” How much better!

But observe the special manner or form of our Lord's petition: “*Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am.*” “Father, I will:” this is more than simply prayer; it is the expression of a special demand based on the relationship between the Father and the Son. It involves intense desire. “I will—it is my will—the thing I seek for all my disciples.” It as if His loving heart and mediatorial character were bound up in this, to have His people with Himself for ever—no more clouds, no longer distance between them. Is not the thought a sublime and stirring one, that the Lord of glory should be so personally and intensely anxious about the eternal happiness of His disciples? How near they are to His heart!

There is something of authoritative right implied in the words, "Father, I will." Jesus asks with the right of a personal claim, and demands with confidence as the only begotten Son of the Father, and as if He appointed what He wishes. None could pray thus, but the Son of God. No mere man could speak in this way without presumption. The holiest and best men have ever been marked by the greatest humility. Abraham, who was recognized by God as His friend, in approaching Him in behalf of Sodom, could only say, "Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes."* Solomon, "in all his glory," at the dedication of the Temple could only say, "Have Thou respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God."† The Apostle Paul, when asking deliverance from his "thorn in the flesh," says regarding it, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice."‡ But Jesus Christ says, "Father, I will," with the tone and truthfulness of personal claim and authoritative right. "Without

* Gen. xviii. 27. † 1 Kings viii. 28.

‡ 2 Cor. xii. 8.

Him was not anything made that was made." It is this will that "rolls the stars along," and moves the planets in their spheres, and makes the seasons revolve. The issue for His disciples is therefore sure when He says, "Father, I will that they may be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me."

II. The Saviour adds a plea to this petition in the words, "*For Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*" Some critics connect these words with those immediately preceding them—"the glory which Thou hast given me"—as if our Lord meant to say that this glory was given Him because the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world. It is more natural to connect them with the prayer. "No doubt the glory which the Father has given the Son may be traced ultimately to the Father's eternal love of the Son; but the immediate and procuring cause of that glory was the Son's doing the Father's will, and finishing the work committed to Him." * All other petitions in this intercessory

* Exposition of John xvii. By John Brown, D.D., Edinburgh.

prayer have their corresponding pleas, and we may justly suppose this petition has its plea. There is much in this to show us the nature of prayer ; that the ear and heart of God are open to our cry, and that in approaching our heavenly Father we may, with Job of old, seek to order our cause before Him, and fill our mouths with arguments.*

Viewed in this light, this plea appears very beautiful, appropriate, and powerful. Many pleas might have been urged by our Lord, but this is the strongest of all. He might have said, "Let them be glorified with *me*, for they are mine ;" or, "Let them be glorified with me, for I have taught them and preserved them ;" or, "Let them be glorified with me, for they love me." But He urges a plea higher than all these, and one comprehending all : "Let them be glorified with me, for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Very wonderful and mysterious to us ! The love of one creature to another is often very great. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it ; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would

* Job xxiii. 4.

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utterly be contemned.”* The strongest love on earth in human hearts is that of the true believer to his Lord, but the love of Christ to His disciples is beyond that to a degree which we cannot measure. How ineffable then, and infinitely beyond all conception of ours, must be the love of God to His only begotten Son. Jesus is the Son of His love. This love is certainly the strongest in the universe, and on that love the Saviour rests His plea for our glorification with Him.

Here, then, is an appeal to the Father's affection: “Thou lovedst me.” Christ's mediatorial life and triumph would not be complete without having His disciples in glory with Him; just as the head cannot be complete without the members, or the vine without its branches, His people were essential to His mediatorial completeness. Jesus might well, therefore, urge the plea, “Thou lovedst me”—Thou lovest me; for God's love is unchangeable. “Let Thy love for me secure and accomplish this very desire for all my followers.”

Here also is an appeal to the Father's faithful-

* Song of Sol. viii. 7.

ness : "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." It was this love which led to the appointment of the Son as Mediator ; it was this love which sustained Him throughout the glorious enterprise ; it was this love which prompted the promise that He should receive the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. And now He pleads that love for the fulfilment of the promise, for the triumphant consummation of His redeeming work in the glorification of His disciples with Himself for ever. As if He said, "Let Thine eternal love accomplish its own high behests. Thou hast loved me from eternity—manifest the unchangeableness of Thy love to me in surrounding me for ever with those whom Thou hast given me, that they may find their bliss in the contemplation of my glory. Our immortal felicity is thus bound up with Jehovah's infinite and immutable love for His only begotten Son. What a future is before us as disciples of Christ ! And on what a glorious certainty does it rest !

XV.

***THE CLOSING APPEAL AND THE
ULTIMATE GLORY.***

XV.

THE CLOSING APPEAL AND THE ULTIMATE GLORY.

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”—JOHN xvii. 25, 26.

THESE words form the conclusion of our Lord's intercessory prayer. They contain no express petition, but rather seal and confirm all that goes before. They seem to be connected specially with what immediately precedes in the twenty-fourth verse, but may be regarded as having a reference to the whole prayer. The Saviour had desired the glory of His disciples, the glory of all who should believe on Him; and now, in closing His prayer, He felt that He could well leave their case with His righteous Father. God knew their character; He knew what Jesus had

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done for them, and the Saviour could confidently believe that all which He asked for them would be performed or bestowed on the very ground of the infinite righteousness of the Father in heaven, who had loved His Son from the foundation of the world. These concluding verses therefore come as an appeal testifying this confidence of Christ in the righteousness of the Father, and giving over the Church which He had instructed, to the operation and triumph of that Father's grace and love as the guarantee of their joy and safety for ever. Four parties are brought before our thought here: God and the world; Christ and His Church, or His disciples; and each of these distinguished by an element of condition or character: God as the righteous Father; the world as ignorant of God; Christ Jesus as knowing Him; and His disciples as knowing that their Master was the sent of God. The Lord introduces Himself and His Church as coming between the righteous Father and the ignorant world. There is truth here rich and profound beyond our powers of thought to fathom, but we may gather up some of its suggestions.

I. God and the world : “ *O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee.*” This designation, in its application to God, stands alone as perhaps the richest and fullest, most expressive, and most encouraging, which Scripture contains. It combines the two elements which are supposed by many to be opposed to each other—the fatherhood and the righteousness of God. There is not an attribute of the Divine character, nor a perfection of the Divine nature, which is not included here. Some look on God in what they call His pastoral character only, the moral Governor of the universe, its Lawgiver and rightful Lord. Others dwell, and delight to dwell, on His relation to us as a Father, and think little of His governance and law. But the designation here used by our Lord—“ Righteous Father ”—combines both ; and the full apprehension of this truth would rectify the erroneous notions of the character of God which many entertain, and would supply the defects in the notions of many others. This designation comprehends all that we need to know about God in His relation to us. He is a Moral Governor, inflexibly just ; He is the Almighty Father, infinitely tender.

The idea of Fatherhood shuts out the thought of severe austerity in the Governor; the idea of righteousness shuts out the thought of weak indulgence in the Father. In all His dealings with us He is at once a loving Father and a moral Ruler. In Him are both authority and tenderness, law and love; and they are not to be separated. He is "the just God and the Saviour," the "righteous Father." Thus the Son of God presents to us in this one designation the "collective effulgence" of the Divine nature. He says not, "Merciful Father," not "Holy Father," but "Righteous Father;" and in the fact that He uses this designation in the closing words of His prayer, there is something very beautiful and instructive. On this character rests all our Christian hope: it is the Rock on which our confidence as sinful men is built for eternity. Were not the righteousness of God engaged for all that Christ asked, we could have no certainty of its attainment. Mercy would not be of avail for us without righteousness, and love would not be reliable if it were not righteous. But the power of the living God is righteous power; His promises are righteous promises; His com-

passion, forgiveness, and mercy are all on the side of righteousness and truth. All the hope of the world, and all the glory of the Church, rest not merely in the Fatherhood of God, but in His righteous Fatherhood. "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments ; Thy testimonies that Thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful."* In His attributes, judgments, and ways, God is altogether and entirely righteous. No fond partiality, no paternal weakness, rashness, or impulsiveness, ever marks His action or purpose ; for He is the righteous Father. Thus we have the assurance that firmness is combined with affection in the government of the Almighty, and that the authority of love is truly the authority of law. The claims of mercy and the claims of justice are alike essential elements of His rule.

But how sad the condition and character which Jesus gives of the world in the words, "*The world hath not known Thee.*" The world ignorant of this highest, most important, and only essential knowledge—the knowledge of its Maker. This is indeed a deplorable and awful condition. Words

* Ps. cxix. 137, 138.

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can describe nothing more desolate or sad. "The world by wisdom knew not God." It may have some pleasing dreams of the Divine power and skill as manifest in the vastness and variety of the marvels of creation ; it may profess to admire His goodness and mercy, but it really has no knowledge of God as a righteous Father, nor does it desire the knowledge of His ways. Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." And this is true of the world generally—ignorant of God, so that Christ could say in terms of true and terrible significance, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." And this ignorance is wilful, and therefore guilty, so that men living without God live without hope in the world. It is indeed a terrible indictment. Amidst all the riches of nature, amidst all the bounties of an unwearied providence, amidst all the grand proofs of the truth that from the first "He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave

us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." * Yet the world knew not this "living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." "The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." † "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." ‡ Yet the world hath not known Him. Creatures ignorant of their Creator; children ignorant of their Father; men ignorant of their God—a knowledge essential to their true life. How dismal! how blameable! how dreadful!

II. But turn now to CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH, for so we may speak of His disciples collectively: "*But I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me.*" What a contrast there is here between Christ and the world: "The world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee." "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he

* Acts xiv. 17.

† Ps. xix. 1.

‡ Rom. i. 20.

to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him.”* “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”† A sublimity and a dignity show themselves in the Saviour’s words, which are grand and impressive: “But I have known Thee.” In the midst of deep and world-wide ignorance of God, Jesus stood alone in His knowledge of the righteous Father, and in His power to communicate this knowledge. “How sublime the attitude! With eyes, hands, and heart uplifted to His God, He stands the only erect man in this world of men, and says to the heart-searcher, ‘O righteous Father,’ the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee.’ Enoch’s attitude was sublime, when, with few righteous left, he threw the warning among the godless, ‘Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints;’ Noah’s attitude was sublime, when, faithful among the faithless, he acted as a preacher of righteousness, and lived what he preached; Elijah’s attitude was sublime, when, from the solitary cave he saw, and said to

* Matt. xi. 27.

† John i. 18.

the Divinity in vision before him, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets, and I, even I only, am left;' and yet more, when, on the heights of Carmel, deserted by all but God, and God deserted by all but him, he launched discomfiture and scorn on the votaries of Baal. Peter's attitude was sublime, when, fifty days after the crucifixion, he convicted the perpetrators of point-blank defiance of God in the bold contrast, 'Whom ye crucified, Him God raised from the dead.' Paul's attitude was sublime, when in his manacles, the thrall of Agrippa, he made King Agrippa his thrall, and hung on the king's poor 'almost' the garland of his own loving and all-conquering rejoinder, 'I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.' Luther's attitude was sublime, when, at the Diet of Worms, in defence of Bible truth and freedom, his words, 'Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me!' fell like a flaming bolt among dukes, prelates, and

princes, and drew from the Emperor of Christendom a whisper of admiration for the solitary monk in whom the truth had found a tongue. Morally sublime are all such cases; but ah, how poor at best compared with the majestic moral picture before us!"* Jesus, as the Son of man, with His few disciples around Him, just about to be forsaken even by them, and to die on the cross for the sins of men, could triumphantly say, "The world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee." In Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and He came to reveal God, to make His knowledge of the Father available for the world.

The Church, for so (as I have said) we may designate the body of the disciples, is next brought before us. "These have known that Thou hast sent me." Jesus does not say, "These have known Thee," but they knew their Master to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God," and this was the first grand step to the full knowledge of God. It was the knowledge which the Saviour wished

* "Christ and the World." Article in *Evangelical Magazine*, 1872, p. 25, by Rev. John Guthrie, D.D.

for all the world besides,* for it is only through Christ that God can be really known by men. Out of His fulness the disciples had received grace for grace. In Him they knew something of the love, goodness, faithfulness, and patience of the Almighty Father: in the unspeakable gift they learned much surely of the nature and character of the giver. To know that God so loved the world as to send His only begotten Son for the salvation of men, is to possess a far higher knowledge of God than can be got from all the works of creation or all the researches of wisdom. Here was one point of contrast between the Church and the world: the world knows not the righteous Father, the Church knows Him whom the Father has sent as "the way, the truth, and the life." So Christ stands forth in His mediatorial position between God and the world, and the Church in some sense seems to occupy a mediatorial position between Christ Jesus and the world. On this ground the Saviour's words are to be regarded as an appeal in behalf of the disciples, that the righteous Father might

* See verses 21—23.

do for them and grant to them all asked for in this remarkable prayer. But how did the disciples attain their knowledge and their position?

III. The teaching or training of the Church, and the design of it: "*And I have declared Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*"

The knowledge which the disciples received flowed from Christ as its source. He taught them all they really knew about God, for none but He could declare or manifest the Divine name. Up to that time He had been constantly teaching His disciples concerning the Father, and He was still to teach them—"will declare it." He had bestowed much labour upon them, and the fact of His instruction He presents before the Father as a strengthening of His prayer for them. The future, "*and will declare it,*" may refer to His death and resurrection, and the instructions following those events, in the presence of the risen Lord with His disciples, so far as the personal ministry is concerned. But these words refer to the whole work and testimony of the Holy Spirit, and the promise has been in fulfil-

ment through all the history of the Church. "Christ personally at first by His own ministry, and since then in every age by His Spirit, the Spirit of truth," has been teaching the Church, and the grand theme or lesson has been in some form the name of God the Father. There can be no doubt that our Lord's word throws forward His teaching to the whole body of believers, and to every age of the Church. And what a theme of instruction is the name of God! how wide, how vast, how lofty, how profound! It is the name of our Father, our Creator, our Redeemer, our King, and stands for all that He is in relation to us now and for evermore. Little, comparatively, does it matter what men know, if they are ignorant of God. What avails all that men see in the grandeur, variety, and resplendour of creation, if they read not the name of God there? Of what avail to us is it to hear the melodious voices of nature, or to apprehend the mystic music of the spheres, if we do not hear the "still small voice" of God, and obey it? We may have vast extent of human knowledge, we may roam with intelligent eye and

scientific skill through the wide dominions of creation; we may number the stars, weigh the planets, and discover the secrets of the ocean and its bed; and yet we are ignorant if we know not God. The name of Jehovah is the grandest lesson for man; and Christ alone can teach it. He has been teaching it through all the Christian ages, and is declaring it still by the mission of the Comforter, the Spirit of all truth. In this way the Church rises in its knowledge of Him as Jehovah-jireh,* who will provide for all the wants of His people; as Jehovah-nissi,† the glorious escutcheon and banner of all who are fighting the battle of life in the good fight of faith; as Jehovah-shalom‡ the only giver of peace to the souls of men in this world of trouble; as Jehovah-tsidkenu,§ the only sufficient righteousness for the sinful and fallen creature; and as Jehovah-shammah,|| the glorious King whose presence makes every place to His people a region of safety and of joy. As this knowledge of God increases and spreads, so is

* Gen. xxii. 14. † Exod. xvii. 15. ‡ Judges vi. 24.

§ Jer. xxiii. 6.

|| Ezek. xlvi. 35.

the quickening, purifying, and transforming power of heavenly light from the Sun of Righteousness diffused through the world with the richest blessing to the children of men.

But mark the design of this teaching or revelation of the name of God: "*That the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*" There is a depth in this design which it is impossible for us to fathom. The disciples of Jesus Christ were more than mere pupils, they were friends. He taught them about God, and declared to them the Divine name, that they might have communion and share with Him in the love of the Father, and so enjoy the loftiest and purest fellowship with Himself in heaven for ever. What does this mean? The love of the Father to the Son as Messiah and Mediator was rich, ineffable, indescribable. God loves His works: much more does He love His only begotten Son as the Saviour of mankind. Yet in the vastness and glory of His love we may share. Whatever the words really mean in the depth of their mystery, it belongs to the humblest disciple of Christ as truly as it did to the Apostles—"That

Thou mayest love them with the love with which Thou hast loved me,"—an issue secured only by Christ Himself being in them. Surely this is the highest felicity for the people of God. It is not only the love of God towards them, but a love corresponding to God's love to Christ resting and abiding in them, a love of complacency and delight. What blessedness can equal this? The love of God in us—the love of God to Christ dwelling in us? Christ Jesus was the first recipient subject of that Divine love which extends to the whole Church. "It is all, the whole of it, in the first place, fixed upon Him, and by and through Him is communicated unto the Church." Whatever the disciples receive is but as the stream or flowing of this fountain of love to the Saviour Himself. Man's heart is formed for love; pure affection is its very life; and to have the Divine love in all its fulness and richness resting on the soul, to share with Christ in the love which the Father has to Him, is surely our highest possible blessedness. It is at once the mightiest power and the greatest joy. It is a defence in danger, a strength in weakness, and

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a solace in sadness. Under this love darkness is dissipated, sin is dethroned, and holiness becomes triumphant, so that Jehovah can see His own likeness reflected more and more clearly and brightly in the character of the Church. Thus the objects of the Divine benevolence in Christ become more and more through Him the objects of the Divine complacency. This is the grand moral result for the Church, and through it for the blessing of the world. Where the love of God rests, there Christ reigns. "I in them," as if He had said, "That Thou and Thy love, and that I and my love, may be in them." So the Saviour had said of the man who heard and obeyed Him, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." * This is truly the highest fellowship for men—the indwelling love of God through the indwelling presence of Christ. It was not only that the complacency with which the Father regarded the Son might rest on the disciples, but that Christ Himself might dwell in them, the source of life, the Lord of light, the Hope of

* John xiv. 23.

glory. Was not this the experience of St. Paul, when he said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"?* And in this fellowship every believer is permitted to share. The more that we have of Christ, the more we have of the love of God.

With what words, so far as we understand them, could the Redeemer more appropriately or significantly close His prayer? When Christ says, "I in them," what can you name, what can you conceive of blessing or of good, that the Lord Jesus does not bring along with Him to the souls in which He dwells? To them God will deny nothing; from them He will withhold no good thing, so that their immortal blessedness is sure. How often does the fellowship of a human friend help us in our earthly pilgrimage, strengthening our courage, nerving us for endurance, and cheering us in sorrow. What then must be the fellowship of the Son of God? "I in them," ever present, ever gracious, ever mighty! What more can we need, desire, or imagine? And with what effect on us? If

* Gal. ii. 20.

Christ is in us, how earnest will be our devotion, how ardent our love, how faithful our dutifulness, how hearty our obedience, how holy our life ! If Christ is in us, how burning will be our zeal, how true our benevolence, and how great our patience ! If Christ is in us, how glorious will be our prospect, how triumphant our end, how blessed our eternity with Him ! The Christian disciple may truly say, "This is my all; I ask no more; I need no more; with Christ in me, I fear no evil, I shrink from no difficulty; death has no terrors for me. Christ is in me, and He is my sufficiency; and the love of the Father to Him rests also on me through Him. What that love did for Him it will do assuredly for me. It brought Him through a cross to a crown; it supports and cheers me under every cross now, and by-and-by it will also bestow on me a crown, and raise me to reign with Christ in glory for ever.

